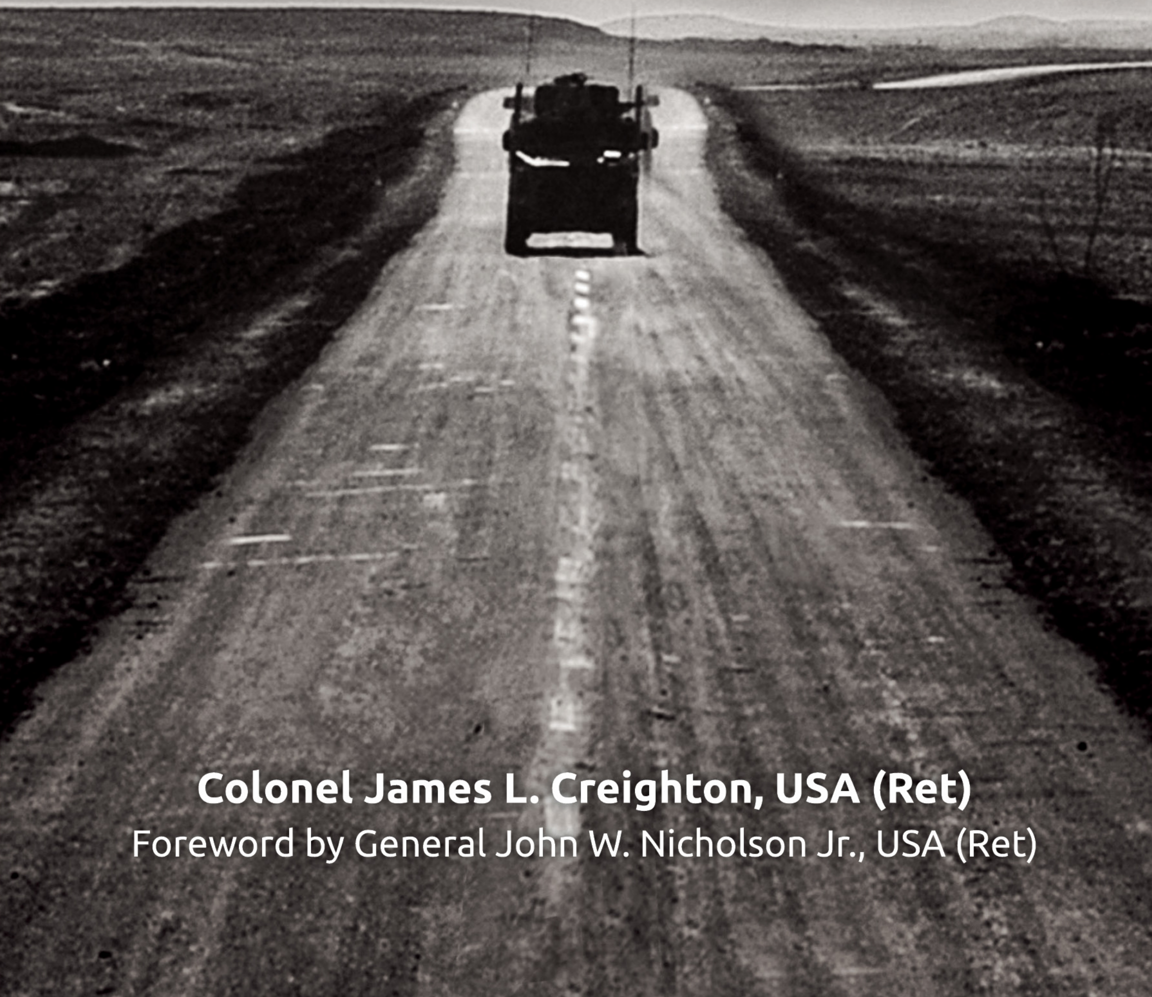
COALITION LEADERSHIP

LESSONS LEARNED WHILE COMMANDING A NATO BRIGADE IN AFGHANISTAN



Colonel James L. Creighton, USA (Ret)

Foreword by General John W. Nicholson Jr., USA (Ret)

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Lessons Learned while Commanding a NATO Brigade in Afghanistan

Colonel James L. Creighton, USA (Ret)

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Foreword

In 2010–11, the years in which U.S. Army colonel James L. Creighton commanded Combined Team Uruzgan (CTU) in Afghanistan, the U.S. military was the most respected institution in the United States, with 78 percent of Americans expressing great confidence in it. While U.S. servicemembers enjoyed the enormous admiration and gratitude of American citizens, their small numbers (less than 3 percent of the nation's population) meant that the exact nature of their work was not well understood by most of the population. This well-deserved reputation emanated from the character and performance of soldiers and leaders like Colonel Creighton, known as "Creatch" or "Jim" to his friends and classmates at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. His humility throughout this history belies the enormous complexity and risk—from physical danger to diplomatic risk—that he navigated expertly on a daily basis. He performed the proverbial process of "building an airplane while in flight" in one of the toughest and most complex provinces of Afghanistan. And he accomplished his mission while caring for the lives and welfare of his team and the Afghan people.

Colonel Creighton's command provides an excellent case study in the leadership of coalitions, which are critical to the United States now and in the future. The U.S. military's mission in Afghanistan enjoyed significant legitimacy because it operated within a coalition that was based on international mandates from the United Nations and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). These mandates enabled unity of purpose among the more than 50 nations that joined the Coalition and sustained that unity for more than 20 years. Coalitions enable the sharing of burdens among troops, funding, equipment, and civil, humanitarian, and development support. When legitimacy is firmly established, political leaders can more easily generate domestic support and secure precious resources. Coalition members contribute within their unique capabilities, and as a result, the whole becomes greater than the sum of the parts. The unity enabled by legitimacy creates political and military options that are not possible when nations act unilaterally. Ultimately, this unity among the United States and its allies and partners will be essential to prevail in the strategic competition vis-à-vis China and Russia.

In many ways, the campaign in Uruzgan Province was a microcosm of the broader Coalition effort across Afghanistan. It included key NATO allies such as the United States, the Netherlands, France, and Slovakia, as well as major non-NATO allies such as Australia, Singapore, and New Zealand. Donors included non-troop-contributing nations such as India and Japan. Timelines were often driven by political factors more so than military factors. Uruzgan's physical terrain was mountainous and austere, as difficult as any in Afghanistan. The human terrain was as complex as the physical terrain, with internal competition between centrally appointed Afghan government officials and local tribal leaders and warlords. The central government in Kabul often had resources but no social legitimacy, while local leaders enjoyed popular support but had no money with which to meet the needs of people. Corruption was rampant, often fueled by the drug trade. Nevertheless, in spite of these dynamics, most local Afghans judged that their families' lives would be better by supporting the NATO-backed central government over the Taliban. They had experienced the failures and brutality of the Taliban regime firsthand and ultimately concluded that, because of its legitimacy and resources and despite its shortcomings, the new government offered a better future. Throughout all of this shone the selfless service and sacrifice of incredible multinational servicemembers fighting far from their homes to bring stability to Afghanistan, thereby preventing future attacks on their homelands.

Finally, this book is a must-read for the example it provides of exceptional leadership in extraordinarily difficult conditions. Jim Creighton personifies the concept of the humble servant leader. Beginning with his selfless and honorable decision to delay his retirement from the U.S. Army to form and lead CTU, his story is a master class in leadership. Combat is intensely personal, and so it was for Creighton as he conveys eternal leadership lessons underscored by powerful vignettes that will resonate with every combat veteran and leader. For the majority of our citizenry who thankfully have not experienced war, this extraordinary work can help connect readers to their nation's military on a human level, describing how intangibles such as love, trust, and a willingness to sacrifice for others create unbreakable bonds and enable remarkable results. Jim Creighton's work is invaluable for military leaders at all levels as well as the people they serve.

John W. Nicholson Jr.
General, U.S. Army (Ret)

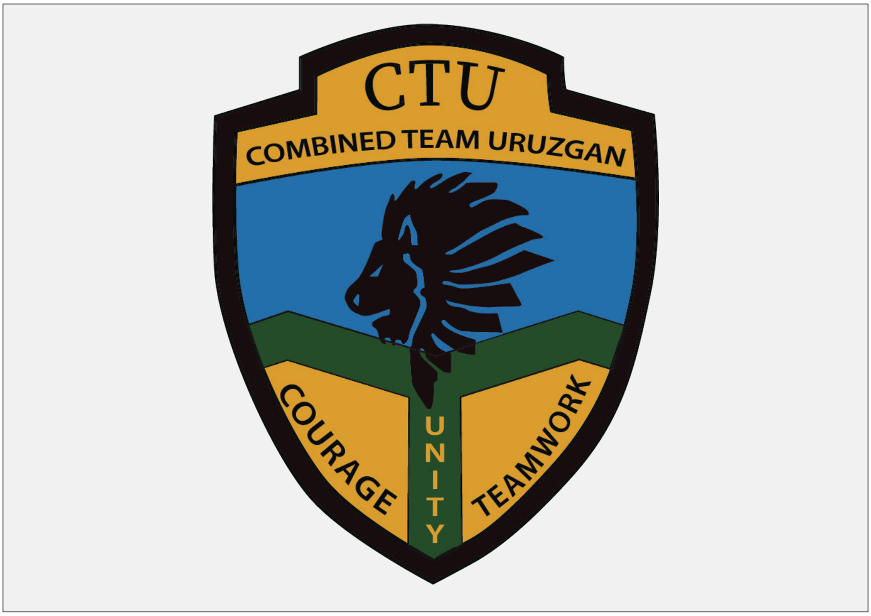
Preface

United States involvement in wars and humanitarian efforts in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria since 1990 have all involved coalitions. In 1991, the term coalition meant that different countries occupied the same space and operated toward a common objective but were not necessarily coordinated in their tactical efforts. The movement of the British Army's 1st Armored Division through the U.S. Army's 1st Infantry Division in Iraq during Operation Desert Storm was a case in point. From this author's perspective as a U.S. Army operations officer in a tracked M577 Command Post Carrier vehicle, the utter chaos caused by hundreds of British vehicles streaming through the U.S. infantry's positions at dawn, with little to no regard for safety or command and control, exemplifies the occupation of space versus the integration of capabilities.

Jumping ahead to 2010, this author was in command of a multinational North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) brigade in Afghanistan that consisted of soldiers, sailors, airmen, and civilians from nine different countries and was integrated into tactical formations down to the platoon level. This brigade, Combined Team Uruzgan (CTU), was responsible for defeating the Taliban insurgency in the provinces of Uruzgan and Daykundi and enabling the government of Afghanistan to build a stable society there. CTU reported to the commander of Regional Command South (RC South), International Security Assistance Force (ISAF): British Army major general Sir Nicholas P. Carter, and his successor, U.S. Army major general James L. Terry. RC South was a multinational division-level command that included brigades from the United States, United Kingdom, and Canada, as well as the combined NATO command, CTU.

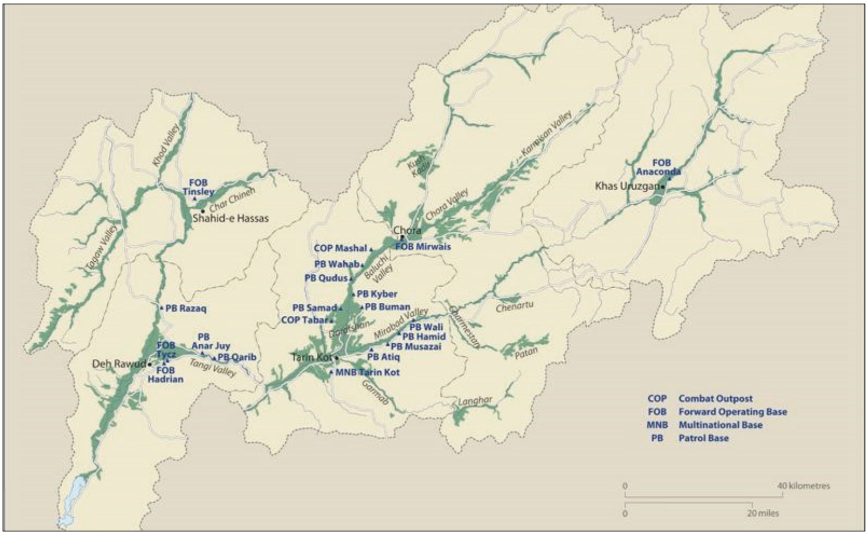
The complete integration of combat capability in Afghanistan compared to the loose geographic association during Operation Desert Storm is indicative of the evolution of the way international operations are increasingly conducted. Coalition warfare has become much more like a soup than a salad, in that units are completely integrated rather than loosely confederated. Important leadership lessons resonate from the experiences that the men and women of CTU shared during a year of counterinsurgency operations. These stories, which tell of success and failure alike, from the inception of CTU through the end of its first operational year in Afghanistan, will help future international organizations organize, plan, prepare, and operate in international environments. Herein, the author has used his own extensive personal notes, verbatim transcripts of weekly debriefs, feedback from CTU members, and unclassified documents from CTU as primary reference sources.

Figure 1. Combined Team Uruzgan patch


CTU
COMBINED TEAM URUZGAN
COURAGE
UNITY
TEAMWORK

Source: courtesy of the author.

Map 1. Uruzgan and Daykundi: CTU's area of operation


Khod Valley
FOB Tinsley
Char Chineh
Shahid-e Hassas
Tagaw Valley
PB Razaq
Deh Rawud
FOB Tycz
FOB Hadrian
PB Anar Juy
PB Qarib
Tangi Valley
Kush Kadir
Karmisan Valley
Chora Valley
Chora
FOB Mirwais
COP Mashal
PB Wahab
Baluchi Valley
PB Qudus
PB Kyber
PB Samad
PB Buman
COP Tabar
Doratshan
Mirabad Valley
PB Wali
PB Hamid
PB Musazai
PB Atiq
Tarin Kot
MNB Tarin Kot
Garmab
Charmestan
Chenartu
Patan
Langhar
FOB Anaconda
Khas Uruzgan
COP Combat Outpost
FOB Forward Operating Base
MNB Multinational Base
PB Patrol Base
0
40 kilometres
0
20 miles

Source: courtesy of the author.

Acknowledgments

This book was written based on my experiences as a North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) brigade commander in Afghanistan between August 2010 and June 2011. The sacrifices made there by thousands of soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines, and civilians serve as a tribute to the Coalition effort to build a safe, stable, and prosperous province in Uruzgan and Daykundi, Afghanistan. Many of these men and women gave their lives in pursuit of this effort. The command's collective energy and dedication to a challenging mission is chronicled in the following chapters, with an eye toward capturing the leadership lessons learned through analysis of Combined Team Uruzgan's (CTU) successes and failures. These lessons will prove valuable to new generations that will continue to try to make the world a safer place.

I was motivated by the actions of the men and women representing Afghanistan, the United States, Australia, Singapore, Slovakia, France, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, and the Netherlands. The teamwork, comradery, and selfless service displayed every day helped inspire effective leadership at all levels. I want to thank the members of CTU who served in Uruzgan for their tireless efforts. Specifically, the numerous CTU teammates who helped me accurately describe incidents, events, challenges, and successes there were instrumental to the telling of this story.

My family, friends, and colleagues convinced me to transform the concept of this book from a simple idea into a narrative that can be used by future coalition leaders. Their patience, attention to detail, and numerous edits provided vital input into the book's completion. Lieutenant Colonel Tamasine Wood-Creighton, USA (Ret), and Conrad Jarzebowski each contributed countless hours to providing valuable thoughts and ideas needed to polish the work. Captain Margaret Nichols of the Australian Army was the CTU public affairs officer whose tireless efforts to document CTU's actions and the weekly impressions by its commander and command sergeants major provided the backbone on which this book is written.

Marine Corps University has been a valuable partner in bringing this work to life. I want to thank Angela Anderson and Christopher N. Blaker of the Marine Corps University Press for their detailed analysis and insightful edits required to complete this project.

This book is written to honor the memories of the brave Afghans and Coalition soldiers and civilians who sacrificed their lives while striving to make Uruzgan and Daykundi, Afghanistan, a safer place to live.

Chronology of Combined Team Uruzgan

Combined Team Uruzgan (CTU) was established on 1 August 2010. The genesis of the command stemmed from the government of the Netherlands' decision on 20 February 2010 to pull its troops out of Uruzgan Province, Afghanistan. The International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), a multinational military mission in Afghanistan that was made up of troops from North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) member states and their partners, was determined to maintain a Coalition presence in Uruzgan. CTU was conceived, coordinated, and established to sustain Coalition gains made there by the Dutch. This section offers a chronology of the establishment of CTU and critical events that occurred during its first year of operation.

2010

20 February	Prime Minister of the Netherlands Jan Pieter Balkenende Jr. attempts to keep 1,950 Dutch soldiers in Afghanistan, contrary to prior agreements to withdraw all Dutch troops from the country. This results in a collapse of the Dutch government and an order to withdraw all Dutch soldiers from Uruzgan.[1]
25 February	ISAF Joint Command (IJC) analyzes whether to replace the Dutch contingent in Uruzgan. Subsequent decisions to continue Coalition involvement in Uruzgan yields an extensive planning process, close coordination with NATO and non-NATO allies, and a plan to replace the Dutch command in Uruzgan with a combined NATO brigade commanded by a U.S. Army colonel. Col James L. Creighton, then serving in Afghanistan and nearing retirement from the U.S. Army, is tasked to coordinate and write this plan.
26 April	U.S. Army LtGen David M. Rodriguez asks Col Creighton to forgo his retirement, which was to begin on 2 May, and remain in Afghanistan for another year to command CTU.[2]
1 May	U.S. Army Gen Stanley A. McChrystal approves the plan for re-

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[1] Leo Cendrowicz, "How the War in Afghanistan Sank the Dutch Government," *Time*, 22 February 2010.
[2] Author's notes, book 1, 26 April 2010.

placing Dutch leadership in Uruzgan and approves the selection of Creighton as the first commander of CTU.[3]

24 June

Meetings are held with Dutch military, diplomatic, and nongovernmental organizations in The Hague, Netherlands, with the objective of enhancing Creighton's knowledge of what the Dutch have accomplished in Uruzgan, what agreements have been made, and what has yet to be completed. These discussions are important to broadening Creighton's understanding of the Coalition effort in Uruzgan.

28 June

Creighton provides first guidance to the nascent CTU staff at the Regional Command South (RC South) compound, located in the vicinity of Kandahar, Afghanistan, approximately 150 kilometers from Tarin Kowt, Uruzgan. Between 28 June and 31 July, the CTU staff conducts a detailed mission analysis and publishes a comprehensive operations order that establishes the CTU mission and defines its operational design. During this time, extensive command and staff coordination is conducted with higher headquarters, adjacent and supporting commands, and subordinate organizations.[4]

30 July

Australian soldiers are accused of stabbing a Koran in the Mirabad Valley in the southeast region of Uruzgan, which prompts a shura (meeting of tribal elders) between CTU leadership; the acting governor of Uruzgan, Khodi Rahim; the Afghan National Police (ANP) commander, BGen Juma Gul Hemat; the local Afghan National Army (ANA) commander, BGen Abdul Hamid; the local tribal leader Matiullah Khan; and tribal elders from the Mirabad Valley. This shura leads to an agreement between the elders that the aforementioned event did not happen and that the Australian soldiers are blameless.[5] After more than five hours, the shura disbands, its participants satisfied with the outcome.

1 August

Creighton assumes command of CTU from the Dutch Task Force Uruzgan commander, Royal Netherlands Army BGen Kees van den Heuvel.[6]

24 August

The Battle of Derapet is the first significant combat operation under

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[3] Author's notes, book 1, 1 May 2010.

[4] Author's notes, book 1, 28 June 2010.

[5] Col James L. Creighton, "Shades of Gray in Afghanistan," *Diplomat*, 8 April 2015.

[6] Richard Tanter, "ADF–Command–Afghanistan," briefing book, Nautilus Institute for Security and Sustainability, 16 August 2010.

CTU command. Australian Army diggers (soldiers) fight valiantly to remove Taliban control of the Tangi Valley. This battle demonstrates that CTU can fight as a coordinated team from the squad to brigade level. Unfortunately, LCpl Jared W. MacKinney is killed in the battle.[7] Cpl Daniel A. Keighran is awarded the Victoria Cross for Australia, the highest award in the Australian honors system, for his gallantry during the fight.

16 September	Afghans in Chora, Uruzgan, accuse Australian soldiers of burning a Koran. This accusation incites a riot that begins at Forward Operating Base (FOB) Mirwais and continues to the district governor's compound less than a kilometer away. One Afghan is killed and others are injured as they attempt to storm the Afghan- and Australian-defended FOB. The demonstrators are quieted for the evening and return to their homes.[8]
17 September	On the second day of the response to the alleged burning of the Koran, demonstrators move to the provincial capital in Tarin Kowt with the aim of taking it over. CTU monitors their advance over 42 kilometers using informants in the crowd and unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs). The provincial police chief, BGen Hemat, is able to intercept the crowd and broker an arrangement whereby the demonstrators' leaders are escorted to the office of the acting provincial governor, Khodi Rahim, for talks. The provincial leaders convince the tribal elders that the accusations are false, thereby avoiding further conflict.[9]
18 September	Afghan parliamentary election day. CTU and its Afghan partners are responsible for securing 79 provincial polling sites in Uruzgan and Daykundi Provinces.[10] Although the elections are successful, CTU can only secure 61 of the 79 polling sites.[11]
20 September	The CTU aerostat balloon becomes operational. This dirigible-mounted camera surveillance system adds significant intelligence and counter-rocket and -mortar identification capabilities, which helps in both protecting CTU's base and planning future operations.[12]

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[7] David Ellery, "Grit and Grief at Derapet," *Canberra Times*, 12 May 2012.
[8] Capt Margaret Nichols, ADF, interview with the author, 26 September 2010.
[9] Nichols, interview with the author, 26 September 2010.
[10] Author's notes, book 4, 16 September 2010.
[11] Author's notes, book 4, 18 September 2010.
[12] Nichols, interview with the author, 26 September 2010.

30 September	The second rotation of Australian staff officers arrive in Uruzgan. The frequent rotation of Australian staff officers, who make up almost 80 percent of the CTU staff, requires constant communication and coordination.[13] For example, between August 2010 and June 2011, there are five planning officers (J-5) assigned to CTU.
2 October	Australian prime minister Julia E. Gillard visits CTU, which helps validate that the CTU plan is aligned with Australia's national objectives.[14]
4 October	U.S. Army PFC Cody A. Board of 1st Squadron, 2d Stryker Cavalry Regiment, dies from wounds sustained in an attack near FOB Hadrian north of Tarin Kowt. CTU's command sergeant major, Australian Army WO1 David Gallowa, said that "one of the Australians that was out at the same patrol base had a cry on the commander's shoulder," which served as a "good indication [of] just how integrated the team [is]."[15]
7 October	After two months of operation, CTU conducts the first operational update meeting of the second rotation of Australian staff officers (almost 80 percent of the staff have rotated back to Australia). The briefing is well thought-out and thorough, but the constant rotation of staff requires continuous training and trust building.[16]
9 October	The Australian leader of the opposition, Anthony J. Abbott, visits CTU. This visit is planned based on the political turmoil surrounding the Battle of Derapet. Abbott believes that CTU needs more tanks to fight in Afghanistan. As a result of his visit, however, he changes his position and supports the CTU concept of operations.[17]
14 October	The acting provincial governor of Uruzgan, Khodi Rahim, conducts a shura to determine if the district of Chora will accept the new governor selected in Kabul by the Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG). The Chora elders reject the selection in Kabul, which forces the IDLG to revisit their plan. This offers a critical lesson in tribal leadership and the relationship between Kabul and Afghanistan's rural districts.[18]

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[13] Nichols, interview with the author, 2 October 2010.
[14] Nichols, interview with the author, 2 October 2010.
[15] Nichols, interview with the author, 10 October 2010.
[16] Nichols, interview with the author, 10 October 2010
[17] Paul Toohey and Patricia Karvelas, "Tony Abbott Fires Odd Angry Shot in Afghanistan," *Herald Sun*, 11 October 2010.
[18] Nichols, interview with the author, 24 October 2010.

21 October	Australian Mentoring Task Forces (MTF) 1 and 2 conduct a transfer of authority ceremony. This short and dignified event highlights the turbulence in operating as a Coalition force. Between August 2010 and June 2011, three different MTF units support CTU.[19]
22 October	The so-called "Romeo and Juliet" case in the district of Khas Uruzgan is resolved. CTU leadership meets with leaders in Khas Uruzgan to stop the tribal violence that has been growing between two families whose children had become romantically engaged despite the woman's betrothal to another man. The provincial judge, Maulawi Mohamad Jan, works out a solution between the families using tribal influence and negotiation.[20]
28 October	U.S. Army Gen David H. Petraeus, commander of ISAF, conducts a battlefield circulation visit to CTU. CTU leadership meets with Afghan community leaders and the commander of Task Force 34, U.S. Army LtCol Fleming Sullivan. Task Force 34 is the U.S. special operations unit assigned to IJC Special Operations Command and operating in Uruzgan. Gen Petraeus's visit helps solidify coordination and cooperation between CTU and Task Force 34. This indirect command structure works well and helps facilitate expansion into the rural areas of Uruzgan and Daykundi Provinces.[21]
30 October	CTU conducts a battlefield circulation to meet the new Australian MTF soldiers in Chora. This provides an excellent opportunity to help instill an aggressive spirit into the new Australian units, encouraging their leaders to use "imagination and initiative" to get the job done, even if they do not have all the information required.[22]
6 November	CTU conducts a battlefield circulation at FOB Tinsley, Shahid-e Hassas District, and Daykundi Province to conduct a shura and meet with Task Force 34 soldiers. The shura confirms that there are significant numbers of Taliban soldiers willing to reintegrate into Afghan society.[23]
12 November	CTU conducts a battlefield circulation in Gizab District to meet police chief Lalay, tribal elders, and a Task Force 34 special operations team stationed outside of the town center. Lalay had

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[19] Nichols, interview with the author, 24 October 2010.
[20] Nichols, interview with the author, 24 October 2010.
[21] Nichols, interview with the author, 24 October 2010.
[22] Nichols, interview with the author, 24 October 2010.
[23] Author's notes, Travel book, 5 November 2010.

organized an uprising to remove Taliban control in the district in April 2010.[24] CTU is able to continue to build a solid relationship and validate district priorities.[25]

18 November CTU conducts a battlefield circulation at the village stability operation outpost manned by U.S. special operations forces from Task Force 34 in Kalach. The soldiers in Kalach have been steadily improving the Afghan Local Police (ALP) in the area. This program requires detailed interviews for candidate selection and Coalition oversight in its initial stages.[26]

22 November CTU's operations officer is relieved due to demonstrated inability to treat all members of the Coalition with proper respect and dignity. Tactically and technically proficient, this officer would have been an excellent brigade operations officer in a U.S. infantry brigade. Unfortunately, several unprofessional incidents demonstrate a lack of cultural awareness and understanding toward Coalition leaders and soldiers, which undermined faith and trust in their ability to perform in a multinational unit.[27]

22–23 November The ANA heavy weapons company from 1st Kandak, 405th Brigade, conducts a patrol with its Australian mentors to determine an appropriate location for potential new patrol bases. Day and night patrolling is a significant area of emphasis required to help train the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) while they earn the trust of the local population.[28]

25 November An official ceremony commemorates the completion of the handover of all base facilities from the Dutch to the U.S. contingent in CTU. The details associated with transferring equipment, systems, and procedures from one nation to another prove complex and take more than four months to accomplish.[29]

8 December The Afghan Health and Development Services (AHDS), a nongovernmental organization contracted by Afghanistan's Ministry of Public Health (MPH), coordinates with the Provincial Recon-

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[24] Rajiv Chandrasekaran, "Villagers' Revolt against Taliban Boosts Hope," NBC News, 21 June 2010.
[25] Author's notes, Travel book, 12 November 2010.
[26] Nichols, interview with the author, 27 November 2010.
[27] Nichols, interview with the author, 27 November 2010.
[28] Capt B. J. McDonald, USA, "Combat Team Charlie Partnered Patrol Report," Company Team C, Mentoring Task Force 2 report, 28 November 2010.
[29] Nichols, interview with the author, 27 November 2010.

	struction Team (PRT) and CTU to improve health care logistics in Uruzgan.[30]
13 December	Mohammad Omar Shirzad is inaugurated as the official governor of Uruzgan Province following his appointment by Afghan president Hamid Karzai. This highlights the successful and peaceful change of political leadership using the Afghan system through the IDLG.[31]
16 December	Governor Shirzad conducts a shura with the police chief, tribal elders, and district leaders in Deh Rawood District. Shuras at the district level that are conducted on a regular basis help improve communication and trust at the tribal, district, and provincial levels.[32]
24 December	Matiullah Khan, a tribal leader and warlord in Uruzgan, invites the CTU staff to his compound for dinner with a generous welcome. This dinner is followed in short order by dinners with ANA BGen Mohammed Zafar Khan, ANP BGen Juma Gul Hemat, and National Directorate of Security (NDS) Gen Aziz Zakaria. The Afghan commanders will not be outdone by the warlord, or each other, in terms of hospitality.[33]

2011

8 January	Governor Shirzad holds a reintegration shura, at which three former Taliban detainees are released and reintegrated into local communities based on consultation with their families, local elders, and several local mullahs (Muslim clergy leaders) who are present.[34]
24 January	The trial of Khaliqdad, son of Mohammed Arif, is conducted at the Tarin Kowt Primary Court. Arif is accused of killing the son of the provincial chief justice, Maulawi Mohammad Jan. The trial represents improvements in criminal justice in Uruzgan.[35]
28 January	Battlefield circulation to Sarab District allows Governor Shirzad to reestablish Sarab as a district after it had been liberated from Taliban control. This shura represents the first time that the Afghan government has exerted control over the district since 2007.[36]

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[30] Maj Oscar B. Aldridge, USA, "Expanded GIRoA Healthcare Delivery in Regional Uruzgan," Combined Team Uruzgan Staff Medical Officer report, 8 December 2010.

[31] Author's notes, Travel book, 13 December 2010.

[32] "Deh Rawood District Shura," Provincial Reconstruction Team report, 6 December 2010.

[33] Author's calendar, 24–29 December 2010.

[34] "Prisoner Release Ceremony/Shura," Provincial Reconstruction Team report, 8 January 2011.

[35] "Trial of Khaliqdad, son of Mohammed Arif," Provincial Reconstruction Team Legal Advisor report, 24 January 2011.

[36] Author's notes, book 6, 28 January 2011.

	The Uruzgan PRT reports that wheat seed and fertilizer have been distributed to more than 32,000 families. This report, although accurate, does not reflect that the wheat was delivered well past the last effective planting date due to NATO's "Afghan First" delivery policies.[37]
2 February	The Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) and Save the Children humanitarian organizations participate in a coordination meeting with CTU. This meeting helps unify goals and objectives to improve education and healthcare in Uruzgan.[38]
22 February	A ramp ceremony is held for Australian Army Sapper Jamie R. Lacombe, who died on 19 February while on patrol near Charmestan, west of Tarin Kowt.[39] His death highlights the sacrifices made to expand Afghan government influence in the rural areas of Uruzgan.[40]
26 February	A meeting with the deputy commander of RC South, U.S. Army BGen Kenneth R. Dahl, provides CTU an opportunity to coordinate for higher headquarters support, including a detailed discussion regarding Commander's Emergency Response Program (CERP) procedures. This discussion is followed by a visit to Sorkh Morghab, where the ANA and ANP have made significant strides in building trust with local citizens.[41]
28 February	Gen Petraeus conducts an inspection of CTU, during which he is briefed on the counter-rocket, artillery, mortar (C-RAM) system. The system is recently responsible for identifying 20 rockets fired near Kakarack, east of Tarin Kowt. It identifies the rocket launch location and directs ANA and MTF patrols to find the launch team.[42] The insurgents are not found but rocket attacks are curtailed.
2 March	A transfer of authority ceremony is conducted between the U.S. Army's 1st Squadron, 2d Armored Cavalry Regiment, and 4th Battalion, 70th Armored Regiment.[43]
8 March	The Chutu bridge stabilization project is completed. This bridge provides critical access across the Helmand River near Deh

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[37] "Aid Effectiveness Review Visit," Provincial Reconstruction Team briefing, 28 January 2011.

[38] Author's notes, book 6, 2 February 2011.

[39] A ramp ceremony is conducted on the apron or tarmac of an airfield to honor fallen soldiers.

[40] Nichols, interview with the author, 28 February 2011.

[41] Nichols, interview with the author, 28 February 2011.

[42] Nichols, interview with the author, 28 February 2011.

[43] Capt Christina Merrick, ADF, interview with the author, 8 March 2011.

Rawud. Initially constructed in 2008, the foundations have begun to give way, and the bridge is in danger of collapse.[44]

CTU conducts a battlefield circulation trip to Kaz Uruzgan, including a visit to the local clinic. This visit prompts the following observation: "The Afghan government pays three midwives and two doctors to work there but they don't show up for work."[45]

9–10 March CTU conducts shuras in Gizab and Shahid-e Hassas. The primary purpose of these shuras is to maintain communication between the provincial government and remote districts.[46]

15 March The RC South CERP coordinator meets with members of the CTU staff. The regimental sergeant major, Australian Army WO1 David Ashley, recalls that Col Creighton came out of the meeting "ashen-faced," embarrassed to be an American on this occasion because of the bureaucratic ineptitude of what had started out as an excellent program.[47]

16 March The United Nations Assistance Mission Afghanistan (UNAMA) met with the CTU command and staff to solidify coordination and cooperation between the two organizations.[48]

An improvised explosive device (IED) detonates in the fuel tanker truck yard outside the main gate to the Coalition base. According to Command SgtMaj Ashley, "There was a massive explosion and most people thought it was simply a controlled explosion from the heavy weapons range. Until they saw . . . a fireball and a mushroom cloud down in the sulk yard. We also saw a really brave act by the ANP, who drove their vehicle into the flames as a shield to evacuate a casualty."[49]

20 March The school at Zadeh Kariz officially reopens. The school closed under Taliban control, but once the Taliban is forced out, the ANA is able to consult with the local *malik* (village representative) to open the school again. The school reopens with 40 students. Interpreters teach the initial classes.[50]

27 March A provincial peace and reintegration shura is led by Governor

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[44] "Chutu Bridge Stabilization," Provincial Reconstruction Team Engineers report, 9 March 2011.
[45] Merrick, interview with the author, 8 March 2011.
[46] Merrick, interview with the author, 12 March 2011.
[47] Nichols, interview with the author, 20 March 2011.
[48] Nichols, interview with the author, 20 March 2011; and author's notes, book 6, 16 March 2010.
[49] Capt Margaret Nichols, ADF, interview with WO1 David Ashley, ADF, 20 March 2011.
[50] "School Opening at Zadeh Kariz," Combat Team C, 4th Battalion, 70th Armored Regiment report, 6 April 2011.

Shirzad. Most local elders had an opportunity to meet with leaders from Kabul, including Bismullah Khan Mohammadi, Afghan minister of the interior, and Massoom Stanekzai, Afghan minister of peace and reconciliation. This peaceful gathering highlights critical issues in Uruzgan to senior ministers in Kabul. The local ANA and ANP work closely together to secure the event despite numerous threats.[51]

2 April The 2,225-meter-long military airfield is completed at Tarin Kowt, and the first Boeing C-17 Globemaster III transport aircraft lands on its concrete surface. The airfield is dramatically improved, allowing the civilian airline, Kam Air, to begin weekly operations into Tarin Kowt while also enhancing military support capabilities.[52]

6 April The 42-kilometer-long asphalt road between Tarin Kowt and Chora is more than halfway complete. The road will reduce transportation time between Tarin Kowt and Chora from more than 4 hours to less than 30 minutes and expand trade and commerce between the two largest towns in Uruzgan. The road is completed in summer 2011.[53]

10 April The Department of Public Water building is officially opened in Uruzgan during a ceremony attended by Governor Shirzad and Kabir, the provincial engineer.[54] Upgrading the infrastructure to provide basic services to the people of Uruzgan is a priority for the PRT.[55]

11 April The Uruzgan provincial minister of reintegration, Akmad Rahimi, and a contingent from the Tarin Kowt leadership conduct a reintegration ceremony during which 14 former Taliban soldiers are welcomed back into the community. This is a sign that the Afghan government presents a better governance option for the people of Uruzgan.[56]

12 April The Tarin Kowt education building is inspected by the PRT engineers and is considered incomplete but occupied. This situation represents many of the projects in Uruzgan that were poorly coordinated and supervised.[57]

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[51] "Provincial Peace and Reconciliation Shura," Provincial Reconstruction Team report, 27 March 2011.
[52] "C-17 Landing at Tarin Kowt," MultiNational Base Tarin Kowt report, 2 April 2011.
[53] "Tarin Kowt–Chora Road Construction," Provincial Reconstruction Team report, 6 April 2011.
[54] "Afghan Officials Improve Their Water Management Skills," Reliefweb, 1 September 2011.
[55] "Opening Ceremony: Department of Public Water," Provincial Reconstruction Team Engineers report, 10 April 2011.
[56] "Peace and Reintegration Shura (Khas Uruzgan)," Special Operations Task Force 34 report, 11 April 2011.
[57] "Department of Education Building," Provincial Reconstruction Team Engineers report, 12 April 2011.

13–19 April	Australian, U.S., and Afghan artillerists conduct a partnered firing exercise. Training of Afghan units is continuous and includes all military occupational specialties.[58]
14 April	Community policing workshops serve to improve the coordination between the ANP and local leaders. Discussions regarding ways in which to reduce police violence and improve community support help facilitate safer communities.[59]
18 April	The first 10 of 46 proposed solar streetlights are installed at the main intersection in Tarin Kowt to improve security and commerce in the downtown area.[60]
23–28 April	The U.S. Army's 4th Battalion, 70th Armored Regiment, initiates a checkpoint commander's course designed to improve the respect, performance, and professionalism of the ANP in conducting checkpoint operations in and around Tarin Kowt.[61]
24 April	ALP commander BGen Ali Shah Ahmadzai conducts a ceremony to further the pride, professionalism, and respect for the ALP. The ALP forces operate independently in the remote regions of Afghanistan. While they are highly effective when properly trained and led by quality leaders, oftentimes they are led by ineffective leaders who themselves are poorly trained.[62]
29–30 April	ANP and ANA forces work together to eradicate poppy fields in Uruzgan. Poppy eradication is an Afghan-led effort that is under-resourced and subject to corruption at all levels. CTU recognizes the illicit drug trade as a threat to Afghanistan's future but does not engage directly in the counternarcotic effort due to NATO and U.S. policy decisions.[63]
2 May	The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) begins work on the 15-kilometer road and infrastructure in Deh Rawood and along the route between Deh Rawood and Tarin Kowt. This project takes several months to coordinate and creates almost 1,400 jobs at a cost of $1 million (USD) funded by USAID.[64]

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[58] "Partnered Gunline Operation report," Combat Support Squadron, Mentoring Task Force 2 report, 19 April 2011.

[59] "Community Policing Workshop," 4th Battalion, 70th Armored Regiment report, 14 April 2011.

[60] "Tarin Kowt Solar Lights Project," Provincial Reconstruction Team Engineers report, 18 April 2011.

[61] "Check Point Commander's Course for Afghan National Police," 4th Battalion, 70th Armored Regiment report, 28 April 2011.

[62] "Daykundi Province, Afghan Local Police Uniform Ceremony," 4th Battalion, 70th Armored Regiment report, 24 April 2011.

[63] "Uruzgan Province, Poppy Eradication," Provincial Reconstruction Team report, 30 April 2011.

[64] "Tarin Kowt and Deh Rawood Municipal Refurbishment Recommences," United States Agency for International Development report, 2 May 2011.

CTU leadership conducts a battlefield circulation to Command Operation Post Tabar. This engagement allows the CTU commander to coach and mentor the company commander. There are several outstanding issues that are resolved on the spot as a result of direct coordination at the command level.[65]

3 May

CTU, Task Force 34, and the USAID commences a $620,000 (USD) project to improve the bazaar (outdoor market) in Sar-ab and develop flood control and other infrastructure requirements.[66]

7 May

School supplies for the Kaneqah school are delivered by ANP officers supported by U.S. Army soldiers from 4th Battalion, 70th Armored Regiment. These supplies are purchased in the Tarin Kowt bazaar at a cost of approximately $4,500 (USD). The supplies support approximately 900 students and 26 paid teachers at the school.[67]

8 May

Trade and training school graduation ensures that 22 more local Afghans are qualified find employment in carpentry, in masonry, as electricians, and in other related areas of work. This four-month program has been helpful in building the Uruzgan economy, as evidenced by the numerous "red toolboxes" given out at graduation and seen throughout the province.[68]

10 May

One of several female engagement teams conducts a patrol in the village of Kakrak-e Sharqi in the Tangi Valley. This patrol symbolizes the Coalition's efforts to reach Afghan women with healthcare and other concerns, especially in recently liberated areas such as the Tangi Valley.[69]

26 May

The local warlord, Matiullah Khan, is the subject of a detailed meeting between the provincial governor and provincial chief of police regarding how best to capitalize on his tribal leadership while also reigning in his corrupt practices. This meeting is indicative of the challenges associated with holding corrupt leaders accountable for their actions.[70]

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[65] "Col Creighton Discusses Development Initiatives with Capt Prakash," 4th Battalion, 70th Armored Regiment report, 2 May 2011.

[66] "USAID Sar-ab Municipal Refurbishment and Bazaar Repairs: Cash for Work," Special Operations Task Force 34 and United States Agency for International Development operational report, 3 May 2011.

[67] "School Supplies to the Khaneqah School," 4th Battalion, 70th Armored Regiment report, 7 May 2011.

[68] "Graduation Ceremony: Trade Training School," Provincial Reconstruction report, 8 May 2011.

[69] "Female Engagement and Community Medical Engagement Patrol," Female Engagement Team, 4th Battalion, 70th Armored Regiment report, 10–12 May 2011.

[70] Author's notes, book 8, 26 May 2011.

30 May	An Australian Army soldier, 25-year-old LCpl Andrew Jones of Mentoring Task Force 2, who is assigned as a cook at a partnered patrol base in Chora, is killed by an Afghan soldier also assigned to the patrol base. This incident is one of several "green-on-blue" attacks (insider attacks committed by Afghan soldiers) on CTU soldiers. The threat of these attacks complicates the fully partnered operational guidance that CTU follows and creates a difficult leadership challenge at all levels.[71]
1 June	The provincial governor hosts a security meeting attended by U.S. Army MajGen James L. Terry, commander of RC South; ANA MajGen Abdul Hamid, commander of the ANA's 405th Corps; high-level ANP commanders; and provincial leaders. Coordination of security requirements between political and security leaders at all levels helps sustain security gains.[72]
4 June	Col Creighton and U.S. Army Col Robert B. Akam conduct their first transition meeting. Col Akam will assume command of CTU after a year of service at IJC in Kabul. He understands the mission of CTU and the higher-level intentions, but does not know his subordinate commanders or staff. Helping him learn about CTU quickly is a critical component to sustaining operational momentum.[73]
17 June	The CTU change of command and retirement ceremony is conducted in the Boeing AH-64 Apache attack helicopter maintenance hangar in Tarin Kowt. Col Akam officially succeeds Col Crighteon as commander of CTU. This is Creighton's last day in uniform. Following the ceremony, he boards an Australian Lockheed C-130 Hercules transport aircraft and begins his journey home.

This chronology of events between February 2010 and June 2011 represents the scope and breadth of activity in a NATO combat brigade in Afghanistan.

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[71] Terry Cook, "Two More Australian Soldiers Killed in Afghanistan," World Socialist Web Site, 6 June 2011; and Nichols, interview with the author, 30 May 2011.

[72] Author's notes, book 8, 3 June 2011.

[73] Author's notes, book 8, 4 June 2011.

Glossary of Select Terms, Abbreviations, and Acronyms

AHDS	Afghan Health and Development Services
ALP	Afghan Local Police
ANA	Afghan National Army
ANP	Afghan National Police
ANSF	Afghan National Security Forces
ARTF	Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund
AusAID	Australian Agency for International Development
CERP	Commander's Emergency Response Program
CSTC-A	Combined Security Transition Command–Afghanistan
CTU	Combined Team Uruzgan
EQUIP	Education Quality Improvement Project
EUPOL Afghanistan	European Union Police Mission in Afghanistan
Europol	European Police Office
FET	female engagement team
FOB	forward operating base
GAO	U.S. Government Accountability Office
GIRoA	Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
HMMWV	High Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicle
HNI	Health Net International
IDLG	Independent Directorate of Local Governance
IEC	Independent Election Commission
IED	improvised explosive device
IJC	ISAF Joint Command
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
ISI	Inter-Services Intelligence
JIOC	Joint Intelligence Operations Center
KAU	Kandak Amniante Uruzgan
LZ	landing zone
MRE	mission readiness exercise
MTF	Mentoring Task Force
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NDS	Afghan National Directorate of Security

NGO	nongovernmental organization
OCCP	Operational Coordination Center, Provincial
OEF	Operation Enduring Freedom
OIF	Operation Iraqi Freedom
PRT	Provincial Reconstruction Team
RC South	ISAF Regional Command South
SEAL	Navy Sea, Air, and Land team
SIGAR	Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction
SIGIR	Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction
SOF	special operations forces
UAV	unmanned aerial vehicle
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development
USFOR-A	U.S. Forces–Afghanistan
WFP	World Food Programme

COALITION
LEADERSHIP

INTRODUCTION

Since its invasion of Afghanistan in October 2001, the United States has been in continuous conflict throughout the world. These conflicts have gained greater legitimacy and global acceptance by the formation of coalitions of like-minded countries that work together toward a common purpose. From lasting treaty-based alliances such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), to bilateral alliances between the United States and Korea and the United States and Japan, to recent coalition engagements in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria, nations with common interests, goals, and objectives have melded into unified fighting forces on numerous occasions.

The nature of the interaction between these nations is more closely woven now than in previous conflicts as countries work together to solve global challenges. Leading coalition forces requires more than the technical and tactical expertise gained through years of experience serving in a nation's armed forces. Commanding soldiers from many different countries demands the professionalism developed throughout a military career as well as a deep understanding of cultural, political, legal, and operational differences that must be considered when building an effective and cohesive team of diverse nationalities. As Singapore Army lieutenant colonel Alvin Chan explained about his service in Afghanistan with Combined Team Uruzgan (CTU), a multinational NATO brigade:

> From the onset, the Singapore team felt valued, and every effort was made to integrate us into HQ [headquarters] CTU from [the] top-down, starting [with] the CTU leadership. Despite our different cultural and military backgrounds, CTU made every effort to engage us both at personal and professional levels, taking time to listen, to learn, to exchange, [and] to seek common ground. On this basis, we participated actively in routine command group meetings and dedicated mission planning. It was no different from how we operate with a Singaporean headquarters in operations, and we were assigned critical ISR [intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance] missions in support of CTU units. Despite working with representatives from different nationalities, there was not a single day that we felt left out under CTU leadership, and this distinct operational rapport essentially underpinned the highly

> effective levels of interoperability in this multinational team that was HQ CTU.[1]

CTU was established on 1 August 2010 as the result of a political decision by the government of the Netherlands to pull the preponderance of its military forces out of Afghanistan.[2] After writing the plan to replace the Dutch forces in Uruzgan Province, Afghanistan, the author, U.S. Army colonel James L. Creighton, was selected to be the first commander of CTU.[3] This book will use both the personal and operational experiences of CTU in Afghanistan from June 2010 to June 2011 to identify leadership lessons learned and highlight how these lessons may be instrumental for coalition leaders of any country in a unit deployed on future operations. These lessons may also prove beneficial to civilian leaders from governmental and nongovernmental organizations. The future of combat operations for the U.S. military will most likely involve operating with coalitions to achieve national objectives. The lessons learned while operating with CTU in Afghanistan will help future leaders—both in the United States and throughout the world—understand how to build effective teams, integrate multinational capabilities, and maximize the potential of all contributing nations.

CTU's close cooperation with an Australian Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT), the U.S. Department of State, the United Nations, and numerous nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) yielded a unity of purpose that enabled the government of Afghanistan to maximize its potential for creating a stable environment in the provinces of Uruzgan and Daykundi. Moreover, the lessons learned from serving with coalitions also benefit multinational players involved in any conflict, including agency leaders, military personnel, and governmental and nongovernmental organizations. As Paul Foley, who served as Australia's ambassador to Afghanistan between 2009 and 2012 and who was instrumental in securing Australian support for CTU, said of the multinational NATO brigade:

> [CTU] stood tall as a highly integrated and capable multinational military operation, comprising U.S., Australian, Slovak, and Singaporean forces, working in close and effective civil-military partnership with the [Australian] Provincial Reconstruction Team and local Afghan leadership to bring security, stability, and development to the highly contested Uruzgan Province.[4]

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[1] LtCol Alvin Chan, SAF, interview with the author, 6 March 2022.

[2] David Fox, "Dutch Troops End Their Mission in Afghanistan," Reuters, 1 August 2010.

[3] Author's notes, book 11, 2 May 2010.

[4] Paul Foley, Australian ambassador to Afghanistan (2009–12), interview with the author, 27 March 2022. Amb Foley was instrumental in securing Australian support for CTU. His insights into CTU's operations are based on meetings he attended in Uruzgan Province on a regular basis.

Figure 2. Col James L. Creighton in Uruzgan Province, 2010

Source: courtesy of the author.

This book is intended to serve as a reference for military and civilian leaders who are tasked with creating, organizing, and operating in a coalition formation. It draws on lessons learned in Afghanistan when CTU was conceived, designed, and deployed between February 2010 and June 2011. The book begins by exploring why and how the multinational NATO brigade was established. It then draws on the experiences of the brigade to explore the tactical, operational, strategic, and political aspects of the combat force. The operational context for which CTU was designed is described by examining specific events to understand the dynamics of the situation and the requirements associated with the brigade's mission. After specific actions and events are described and the leadership lessons that were learned are analyzed, concepts vital to future coalition commands are identified and explored to highlight their relevance and applicability. A representative list of lessons learned is consolidated at the end of the book to provide a quick reference of the concepts internalized by leaders within the command.

CHAPTER 1

Coalition Leadership in Uruzgan

How Positive Leadership Makes an Impact

The author tucked his chin into his chest and made sure that his ear plugs were well embedded in his ears. As he had done hundreds of times during his 29-year career in the U.S. Army, he instinctively ducked his head unnecessarily and hustled under thundering rotor blades onto the Sikorsky UH-60 Black Hawk utility helicopter that was to carry his team on a 40-minute flight from Kandahar, Afghanistan, to Tarin Kowt, the capital of Uruzgan Province. Taking his seat at the right rear of the helicopter, the author looked out from the open door and felt the unrelenting 120-degree heat hit his face. He was off on another adventure, this time to establish a multinational coalition brigade as part of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) operations in Afghanistan. The brigade had been designed by the staff of the International Security Assistance Force's (ISAF) Joint Command (IJC) in the Afghan capital of Kabul to replace the Netherlands' contribution to NATO activity north of Kandahar. The brigade was to be built with contributions from multiple countries that were committed to improving security and living conditions for Afghans in the provinces of Uruzgan and Daykundi.

Unlike previous leadership assignments that the author had held during his career, the staff and subordinate commanders of this NATO brigade were all new to him. He did not have the opportunity to build relationships and get to know them prior to deployment. He was being given the opportunity to command a force that was primarily non-American, which had different cultural values, operational norms, and national caveats. Of the approximately 3,000 soldiers under his direct command, fewer than 40 percent were American. The command consisted of approximately 1,500 Australian Army soldiers, 1,000 U.S. Army soldiers, and 500 soldiers from seven other countries. Of the nine countries contributing to the brigade, aptly named Combined Team Uruzgan (CTU), Australia made the largest contribution, providing the Mentoring Task Force (MTF), the majority of the CTU staff, the Multinational Base Tarin Kowt leadership, and Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) staff. Major subordinate commands were provided by Singapore, which contributed unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), an analysis team and counterbattery radar; Slovakia, which contributed an infantry security company; and France, which contributed an infantry company. The brigade was augmented by soldiers and civilians from the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, and New Zealand who filled vital staff functions.

The author was an experienced U.S. Army artillery officer who had been tasked with commanding an infantry brigade for a British Army officer, Major General Sir Nicholas P. Carter, in a region he had visited only once and for one day. He had met the CTU staff only a week before traveling from Kandahar to Tarin Kowt, and they had never worked together before that. Typically, a brigade will undergo at least 12 months of intense predeployment training and team-building exercises that enable the brigade commander to build relationships, instill their vision, and create a team that works together seamlessly.[1] Predeployment training for most brigades consists of many weeks spent in the local training area and national training centers improving individual skills and small unit tactics, understanding and refining standard operating procedures, and improving battle drills, all tailored to the specific area to which they will deploy. The author had been given less than 30 days to achieve the same result.

Looking out the window of the helicopter as it lifted into the deep blue sky and headed toward Tarin Kowt, the author thought, "What did I get myself into?" Leading a large organization into combat without knowing who was to the left or right; lacking an understanding of the strengths, weaknesses, and tendencies of subordinate commanders and staff; and trying to comprehend the scope of a broad mission that spanned the spectrum from intense combat operations to building schools and caring for sick children was daunting at best. The author could easily have been intimidated by the scope of the task, the number of unknowns, and the dangers associated with the combat environment.

The first step to providing effective leadership is accepting the challenge wholeheartedly. One must possess and demonstrate self-confidence even if one's gut is initially turning inside. Inspiring confidence in the face of adversity promotes high performance across the entire organization even if its leader is still finding that confidence within themselves. Respected leaders are confident in their own ability to inspire others. They stay focused on the larger tasks at hand while guiding their organization through the myriad of challenges along the way. Successful leaders find a way to maximize the potential of their people and their organizations to overcome what otherwise would be insurmountable obstacles. This is the first step toward providing effective leadership in a coalition environment.

As the helicopter began its approach into Tarin Kowt, the author steeled himself for the challenges ahead. He relished the opportunity to make an impact. Leading CTU required positive leadership, a clear and simple vision, and tremendous teamwork. He had the opportunity to lead a talented group of professionals representing many NATO and partner nations to achieve their goals. In hindsight, CTU was highly successful in some areas and could have done much better in others. For example, the brigade was able to expand security along the major routes of communication between Kandahar and Tarin Kowt and between Tarin Kowt and the provincial district centers in Uruzgan. Security along these routes allowed commerce to grow and *bazaars* (outdoor markets) to fill once-empty stalls. Direct support from the PRT helped improve education, agriculture, and government effectiveness. These gains were offset by continuing challenges. CTU worked closely with government officials and police leaders but was not able to eliminate corruption within the provincial government and police. Improvements in governance processes and procedures were not sustainable. Attempts to improve education, security, and transportation infrastructure yielded mixed results. Construction of schools, Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) buildings, and roads was started but in many cases was not completed. The leadership lessons learned through these experiences are being shared here in an effort to aid future leaders who may be tasked with building international teams to perform in trying situations.

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[1] *Military Operations: Force Generation—Sustainable Readiness*, Army Regulation 525–29 (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2019), 28.

Leadership Art and Science

The U.S. Army defines *leadership* as "the activity of influencing people by providing purpose, direction, and motivation to accomplish the mission and improve the organization."[2] A positive and trusting command climate is the foundation for a high-performing organization. Successful leaders master the art of motivating individuals to overcome obstacles and maximize their potential to achieve defined objectives. They build effective teams that capitalize on the strengths of their members while also accounting for their weaknesses. They understand both the capabilities and limitations of their teammates and know how to motivate them. These leaders accomplish their missions because they apply the science of leadership appropriately based on the needs, desires, and tendencies of those that they lead. This book will explore the lessons learned from the perspective of a NATO brigade commander who led in a coalition environment in the Afghan provinces of Uruzgan and Daykundi between July 2010 and June 2011.

Establishing a Common Vision

Leading people requires establishing a vision of where one wants to take one's unit. This vision should offer a clear and concise description of the path that the leader sees their unit traversing in the future and the culture that needs to be established within the organization. A simple positive vision that is clearly stated, well understood, and repeated often will help to build positive organizational momentum toward a common objective. The CTU vision was to work together as one team to help the provincial governments in Uruzgan and Daykundi earn the respect of their citizens by providing security and development. This vision stemmed from the ISAF intent described by U.S. Army general Stanley A. McChrystal in his report to the U.S. Congress following his initial assessment in August 2010.[3]

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[2] *Army Leadership and the Profession*, Army Doctrine Publication 6-22 (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2019), 1-13.

Developing a Unifying Mission Statement

Providing effective leadership in CTU began with drafting an effective mission statement. As commander of CTU, the author provided guidance to the CTU staff, guided them through the mission analysis process, and approved the final mission statement. The mission analysis process as outlined in *Commander and Staff Organization and Operations*, U.S. Army Field Manual (FM) 6-0, was understood by all members of the CTU staff. (Australian and New Zealand staff members were trained on this process as well.)[4] Analyzing the situation and environment, verifying higher headquarters directives, collecting facts, understanding how one's unit fits into the bigger picture, and soliciting input and feedback from one's own team are all intrinsic to understanding task requirements. Concise communication will give all members of the organization direction and purpose and unify them in a positive way. Developing an effective description of what precisely is required of the organization is essential to ensuring that the unit will achieve the directives, both specified and implied, that are given by its higher headquarters. In a coalition environment, operational concepts must be thoroughly vetted with all contributing formations to ensure acceptance and confirmation with national priorities and limitations. Mission validation is achieved by briefing one's boss at the next level, which enables the higher-level commander to modify, adjust, and approve one's concepts.

Coalition Leadership in Action

Leadership is the catalyst that ensures mission accomplishment. Leaders understand how to motivate people to maximize their potential. They possess the vision to see how each member of the team fits into the overall mission. One exciting aspect of leadership is being able to influence people and watch them grow and develop while acting as part of a successful team. There are specific leadership techniques and actions that are codified in principles that are documented in doctrine. These principles apply whether one is leading in a national organization or a coalition environment. From a coalition perspective, learning about and understanding cultural dynamics, operational training standards, and communications norms is required to lead effectively. The U.S. Army has developed a set of 11 principles that help define the science of leadership. These principles are listed in appendix A.[5]

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[3] Catherine Dale, *War in Afghanistan: Strategy, Operations, and Issues for Congress* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2011), 9. Regarding Gen McChrystal's guidance, the author writes: "First, he prioritized efforts to support responsive and accountable governance equally with security efforts, stressing the Afghan people's 'crisis of confidence in the government.' Second, he advocated raising the target end strengths for the Afghan National Security Forces substantially, to a total of 400,000 forces, and ensuring their effectiveness through 'radically improved partnership [with ISAF forces] at every level.' Third, he introduced geographic prioritization of effort across Afghanistan as a whole—a significant change from past approaches in which each part of the country was managed de facto as a 'national' campaign led by the Allied country with troops deployed there. And fourth, he stressed the need to change ISAF's operational culture in two key ways—to more closely interact with the population, and to significantly improve internal unity of effort."

[4] *Commander and Staff Organization and Operations*, Field Manual 6-0 (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2014), 9-1. This field manual describes the military decision-making process (MDMP) as "an iterative planning methodology to understand the situation and mission, develop a course of action, and produce an operation plan or order." The MDMP "helps leaders apply thoroughness, clarity, sound judgment, logic, and professional knowledge to understand situations, develop options to solve problems, and reach decisions. This process helps commanders, staffs, and others think critically and creatively while planning."

Keys to Success

Based on the application of the principles of leadership during the last 40 years, the author has developed his own specific methodology that helped apply these principles while serving as a coalition commander. They are specific to the author's experience in the field but provide guidelines that can be followed by anyone assuming a new leadership responsibility within a coalition. They are referred to as "Keys to Success."[6]

Teamwork

- Team members want to do what is right, so a leader must help them succeed. Helping team members succeed requires constant training, assistance, and explanation.
- Work together as a team at all levels; it is the only way to succeed.
- As individuals, look for ways to help each other.
- Leaders communicate, cooperate, collaborate, and coordinate continuously.

Leadership and Values

- Demonstrate and demand professional competence and technical expertise through selfless service.
- Attitude is infectious; make it positive.
- Coach, teach, mentor, and counsel your team at every opportunity.
- Establish, explain, and enforce high standards. The standard is set by actions, not words.
- Loyalty, honor, and integrity are nonnegotiable.

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[5] Erin Meyer, *The Culture Map: Breaking through the Invisible Boundaries of Global Business* (New York: Public Affairs, 2014).
[6] James L. Creighton, "Experiences in Leadership" (course syllabus, 26 January 2009).

- Leaders have the courage to question what does not make sense.
- Know what “right” looks like. Teach it and then enforce it.
- Assume responsibility for your organization and be accountable.
- Distribute praise publicly, absorb criticism, and focus on solutions rather than problems.
- Resolve disputes privately and not via email.
- Possess the courage to do the right thing for the right reason and take initiative.
- Exacting discipline builds a positive climate that underscores pride, esprit de corps, and camaraderie.
- Maintain perspective, keep your sense of humor, and have fun.

Training

- Build a cohesive team that attacks all missions.
- Challenge yourself every day. Honest mistakes are healthy and inevitable. Learn, develop, and grow from your mistakes so that you do not repeat them.
- Set priorities and focus on basics. Teams cannot do everything, so prioritize vigorously.
- Execute fundamentals to a high standard.
- Leaders develop adaptive, aggressive, and innovative teams by training them hard.
- Enforce excellent outcomes through thorough planning, preparation, rehearsal, double-checks, execution, and review.

Take Care of People and Families

- Treat everyone with respect, compassion, and dignity. Build trust and confidence throughout the entire team.
- The team is nothing without physically, mentally, and emotionally healthy colleagues who do their duty without being told to do so.
- Build esprit de corps by being consistent, informing teammates, and listening acutely.
- Do routine things routinely to reduce confusion, streamline decision-making processes, and ease potential friction points.
- Take care of teammates and families by demonstrating genuine concern, communicating constantly, providing appropriate assistance, and instilling an inclusive environment.
- Get to know and professionally develop every person on the team.

The Art of Leadership

While serving as the commander of CTU, the author relied on his training and experience as a leader in the U.S. Army to guide his actions. The Army taught him the principles of leadership at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point and numerous other schools throughout his career. While these doctrinal guidelines provided a solid base of information, figuring out how to apply the principles in a coalition environment required him to apply them in a confusing operational context in which people with different cultures, values, perspectives, and expectations were melded into a cohesive team. The art of leadership is figuring out how to apply these principles in unique environments. In the case of CTU, deciding what actions were needed to motivate and inspire a diverse group of people required empathy and understanding. Describing when and why actions were required demanded a clear understanding of how soldiers from various nations responded to leadership and perceived authority from other countries. Leading in a complex coalition environment required an in-depth knowledge of leadership principles combined with an ability to apply these skills at the proper time and place. Analyzing the decisions made and actions taken by the author while commanding CTU will help identify specific lessons learned from a coalition leadership perspective.

Figure 3. Uruzgan provincial chief justice Maulawi Mohammad Jan

Source: courtesy of the author.

Figure 4. A little boy in Chora is excited about his future

Source: courtesy of the author.

CHAPTER 2

Setting the Scene

Know Your Environment and the Enemy

For a U.S. Army officer, there is no greater honor than to command soldiers in combat. Leading soldiers to accomplish difficult missions and perform at their maximum potential during extended periods of time requires dedicated leadership and technical and tactical excellence. Commanding soldiers in a multinational coalition with nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), host nation support, and interagency elements presents an entirely new set of political, cultural, and operational challenges. The soldiers and civilians of Combined Team Uruzgan (CTU) represented just such a coalition force, made up of more than 3,000 people from the United States, Australia, Singapore, Slovakia, France, New Zealand, the Netherlands, Sweden, and Norway. The lessons learned from the experiences of CTU in Afghanistan demonstrate examples, both positive and negative, of how to command a multinational force in combat.

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) mission in Afghanistan was conceived for the following purpose:

> NATO Allies went into Afghanistan after the [11 September 2001] terrorist attacks on the United States, to ensure that the country would not again become a safe haven for international terrorists to attack NATO member countries. Over the last two decades, there have been no terrorist attacks on Allied soil from Afghanistan. . . . Deployed in 2001—initially under the lead of individual NATO Allies on a six-month rotational basis—ISAF [International Security Assistance Force] was tasked, on the request of the Afghan government and under a United Nations (UN) mandate, to assist the Afghan government in maintaining security, originally in and around Kabul exclusively. NATO agreed to take command of the force in August 2003 and the UN Security Council subsequently mandated the gradual expansion of ISAF's operations to cover the whole country. ISAF was one of the largest coalitions in history and NATO's longest and most challenging mission to date. At its height, the force was more than 130,000 strong with troops from 50 NATO and partner countries. As part of the international community's overall effort, ISAF worked to create the conditions whereby the Afghan government would be able to exercise its authority throughout the country.[1]

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[1] "NATO and Afghanistan," North Atlantic Treaty Organization, 7 December 2021.

NATO led the war effort in Afghanistan with a Coalition of more than 50 countries that were willing to dedicate their people, resources, and political will toward a common goal. Each participating country contributed to its maximum potential based on the political will of its people and government. The resultant fighting force coalesced under international military leadership to fight a counterinsurgency campaign. This campaign was designed to create a secure environment in which the government of Afghanistan could earn the respect of its citizens, provide basic services, and promote stable conditions for economic growth.

The capabilities of each nation's military force were defined by its national caveats, while the requirements of the larger Coalition force were defined by the strategic goals and objectives of the ISAF counterinsurgency plan. National caveats were developed by contributing countries to define the parameters, goals, force structure, and rules of their units used in the Afghanistan theater.[2] Typically, nations outlined where their units could be used, what level of risk of direct contact they were willing to accept, and other restrictions or limitations associated with how their troops were employed. Tactical commanders used their units' missions and intentions to define how to task subordinate units. As a Coalition commander, the author assigned tasks to organizations based on the tactical missions required on the ground but had to verify that the tactical mission did not violate national caveats.

Many nonmilitary actors contributed greatly to the overall effort. The UN, the World Bank, the European Police Office (Europol), foreign ministries, and dozens of NGOs worked independently as well as with the Afghan government and NATO to help create the basis for governance and provide for basic civil services.[3] In 2005, "more than 800 international and indigenous Afghan NGOs operated humanitarian, reconstruction, development and peacebuilding programs in Afghanistan to aid recovery efforts after decades of war."[4] The responsibility of balancing national assets and capabilities provided by contributing governments and independent NGOs with operational requirements fell to commanders at all levels who integrated diverse national capacity with indigenous Afghan systems to maximize the potential of resources available. Commanders were given both national assets and access to independent resources from many countries to fulfill their missions. They also coordinated closely with local leaders and outside agencies to achieve an overall impact. Improvements in education, road infrastructure, and commercial activity followed security gains, but failure to eliminate corruption, inability to follow through on major projects, and ineffective governmental systems hindered long-term stability. This book will explore both the positive and negative aspects of NATO activities in the Afghan provinces of Uruzgan and Daykundi and the leadership lessons learned in the process.

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[2] "ISAF's Mission in Afghanistan (2001–2014)," North Atlantic Treaty Organization, 30 May 2022.

[3] "NATO and Afghanistan"; and "Peace Operations Monitor, Afghanistan," International Community, 3 February 2010.

[4] Lara Olson, "Fighting for Humanitarian Space: NGOS in Afghanistan," *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies* 9, no. 1 (Fall 2006): 1.

CTU epitomized the integration of nine different national force contributions with local government leaders, the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF), and other interested organizations such as the UN, various foreign ministries, and numerous NGOs. Establishing a synchronization of activity around a unifying vision while accounting for limited resources, national caveats, and divergent cultures created leadership challenges. Building a cohesive team that was dedicated to a common mission in a combat environment with only two weeks of preparation and an ad hoc leadership team yielded important lessons: how to command in a coalition environment; how to use positive leadership to build consensus; how to persuade, convince, and cajole subordinates, partners, and outside organizations toward a common goal; when to compromise; and how to negotiate—all while fighting an enemy determined to win.

The Dutch Withdrawal from Afghanistan

The NATO Coalition brigade command structure in Uruzgan grew out of the decision by the government of the Netherlands to withdraw support for counterinsurgency operations in Uruzgan in August 2010. The Dutch contribution to the Coalition effort in Afghanistan centered in Tarin Kowt, the capital of Uruzgan. They first arrived in August 2006 with a force that would go on to total nearly 2,000 soldiers and civilians by the time of their departure. During their deployment, the Dutch concentrated on the "three Ds"—diplomacy, development, and defense—with an emphasis on developing Afghan capacity in basic services and economic growth.[5] The Dutch concept of three Ds was used in lieu of the more common term *counterinsurgency*, which was adopted by the United States and other NATO allies.[6] The Dutch security forces, supported by approximately 1,500 Australians, enabled the establishment of bases in the districts of Chora and Deh Rawood, along the Tiri Rod River, and in the provincial capital of Tarin Kowt (Camp Holland).[7] This team worked to secure Uruzgan's city centers, if not its rural areas, while implementing Western-style governance principles and development projects in support of education, commerce, and health care.

After four years of effort, the Dutch government decided to withdraw its forces from Uruzgan. This decision left the Coalition few options to fill the 2,000-soldier reduction in force structure created by the Dutch departure.[8] This void created the troublesome threat of Taliban expansion filling the gap left by the Dutch. The Taliban's return to Uruzgan—where the home of their leader, Mohammad (Mullah) Omar, was located in the town of Deh Rawood—would threaten ISAF Regional Command South's (RC South) northern flank. If insurgents were allowed to occupy the province, they would have a safe haven from which to conduct operations against RC South's main effort in Kandahar Province. After an exhaustive search for a national commitment to assume responsibility in Uruzgan, ISAF, with the Afghan leadership, decided to create a combined NATO brigade consisting of as many as 3,000 military and civilian personnel from nine separate countries and commanded by a U.S. Army colonel. The brigade was also given the responsibility to assist the provincial government in Daykundi with improvements in governance, development, and security.[9]

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[5] Beatrice de Graaf, "The Dutch Mission in Uruzgan: Political and Military Lessons," *Alantisch Perspectief* [Atlantic Perspective] 34, no. 7 (2010): 18–20.

[6] According to the Department of Defense, *counterinsurgency* is defined as "comprehensive civilian and military efforts designed to simultaneously defeat and contain insurgency and address its root causes." See *DOD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 2021), 51.

[7] David Watt, "Australian Defence Force in Afghanistan," Parliament of Australia, 12 October 2010.

The Geography of Uruzgan

Uruzgan, an area approximately the size of Connecticut, is located north of Kandahar Province in the southern region of Afghanistan. Its harsh terrain is largely devoid of vegetation and highlighted by jagged rock peaks that make up 47 percent of the area. Below the desert-like mountains lay lush green valleys, which make up 21 percent of the province.[10] The Helmand and Tiri Rod rivers slice through these valleys, providing the necessary water to grow exceptional crops of almonds, watermelon, pomegranate, grapes, saffron, wheat, and poppies. The crops are fed by an elaborate irrigation system that has been continuously improved over centuries. Subsistence agriculture dominates the legitimate economy and is supported by trade between the major city centers.[11] In August 2010, the actual economy was largely driven by poppy growth, production, and sale, which had in many cases surpassed traditional crops and served to fund Taliban activities. Trade between the districts and other provinces had been reduced to a trickle due to Taliban threats and banditry along the road arteries linking the population centers.[12] For example, it took an average of 22 hours and a major combat operation to drive the 150 kilometers between the city of Kandahar and Tarin Kowt and 4 hours for a combat patrol to drive 50 kilometers from Tarin Kowt to Deh Rawood. The 42-kilometer drive from Tarin Kowt to Chora was not possible on the main route through the Mirabad Valley and took more than 4 hours by combat patrol over a circuitous route through the desert.[13] Travel to the districts of Khas Uruzgan and Gizab by Coalition forces was only feasible by helicopter. With such difficult lines of communication and roads under constant threat, the *bazaars* (outdoor markets) in the city centers were largely empty. One of the worst of these cases was the village of Saraw, where the Taliban had hanged the village elders and destroyed the bazaar in 2006. On 29 March 2011, Mohammad Omar Shirzad, the governor of Uruzgan, held a *shura* (meeting of tribal elders) with elders from Saraw after U.S. Special Forces Task Force 34, supported by the warlord Matiullah Khan's irregular police force, the Kandak Amniante Uruzgan (KAU), liberated the village.[14] During this shura, Governor Shirzad; the provincial chief of police, Brigadier General Fazl Ahmad Sherzad; and the Afghan National Army (ANA) brigade commander, Brigadier General Mohammed Zafar Khan, assured the local leaders that the Afghan government would support Saraw with police security, development projects, and close connection with the provincial government.[15]

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[8] Emma Alberici, "Dutch Troops Leave Afghanistan," Australian Broadcasting Corporation News, 1 August 2010.

[9] Author's notes, ISAF Joint Command books 8–11, 27 November 2009–1 May 2010. Notes in these books describe the discussions regarding the creation of CTU.

[10] "Uruzgan Provincial Overview," Program for Culture and Conflict Studies, Naval Post Graduate School, March 2017.

[11] Author's provincial customized map, 31 January 2011.

[12] For more on economic factors for the period, see "Afghanistan Economic Update, 2010," World Bank, 10 May 2010; and "Afghanistan GDP 1960–2023," Macrotrends, accessed 14 September 2023.

The Political Landscape of Uruzgan

Uruzgan has been at the epicenter of political turmoil in Afghanistan since the Soviet Union's departure from the country in 1992.[16] That year, the Afghan *mujahideen* (Islamist fighters) gained control of Uruzgan, followed in 1994 by the Taliban. The leader of the Taliban, Mullah Omar, was born in Deh Rawood, and much of the Taliban military hierarchy were from Uruzgan as well. In the early 2000s, the then-governor of Uruzgan, Jan Mohammad Khan, had "become alienated" from Mullah Omar and was aligned with Afghan president Hamid Karzai, who had "launched his armed uprising against the Taliban in the autumn of 2001 from the mountains" between the districts of Deh Rawood, Tarin Kowt, and Kandahar.[17] The close connection that Uruzgan shared with the leadership of both the government of Afghanistan and the Taliban amplified the importance that the province played in the struggle to build a more prosperous country.

Uruzgan is divided into six districts: Shahid-e Hassas in the northwest, abutting Daykundi Province; Deh Rawood in the west, at the north end of the Kajaki Dam in Helmand Province; Khas Uruzgan in the east, abutting Ghazni Province;

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[13] This information is based on briefings of logistics convoy operations received by Australian and Dutch planners in July–August 2010.

[14] Author's notes, travel book, 29 March 2011.

[15] Author's notes, travel book, 19 March 2011; and Spc Ashley Bowman, USA, "Uruzgan Government and Ministry of Education Help Bring New School to Life in Shahid-E-Hasas," DVIDS, 5 July 2011.

[16] Susanne Schmeidl, *The Man Who Would Be King: The Challenges to Strengthening Governance in Uruzgan* (The Hague: Netherlands Institute of International Relations, 2010). This work describes the political situation and history of Uruzgan in detail and outlines the complexity of the leadership environment.

[17] Martine Van Bijlert, "Unruly Commanders and Violent Power Struggles: Taliban Networks in Uruzgan," in *Decoding the New Taliban: Insights from the Afghan Field*, ed. Antonio Giustozzi (London: Hurst, 2009), 156; and Schmeidl, *The Man Who Would Be King*, 14.

Chora in the north, to the west of Khas Uruzgan; Gizab, which officially belonged to Daykundi but culturally, logistically, and historically was aligned with Uruzgan; and the provincial capital of Tarin Kowt, which was not technically a district (it was considered a separate governed space) but from a governance perspective did not fall into the territory of the other districts.[18] In 2010, all of these districts had acting district chiefs, as none had been officially appointed by President Karzai through the Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG).

The acting provincial governor of Uruzgan, Khodi Rahim, had been elevated from deputy governor to acting governor when his predecessor, Asadullah Hamdam, was relieved of his duties by President Karzai at the insistence of the Dutch due to his overt corruption.[19] On 13 December 2010, Rahim was replaced when President Karzai appointed Mohammad Omar Shirzad to the governorship.[20] Because Shirzad was not from Uruzgan, he did not possess the usual historic tribal ties in the province, but he came with an official appointment from the Afghan president, which helped him to navigate a complex provincial political landscape.[21]

As important as the Afghan government was to the politics in Uruzgan, more important was the tribal influence. In Uruzgan, the power and influence of leaders are closely linked to relationships and patronage structures. Overall, the sources of power that form the structural foundations of leadership in Afghanistan in general and Uruzgan in particular fall into three categories (though there is no clear division between these categories, and in fact they often overlap and reinforce each other):

- Inherited (membership of a landed elite family);
- Achieved (mostly through military command, but also through acquitted wealth and education); and
- Appointed (either selected by the population as their representatives vis-à-vis the district authorities, and/or holding a government post).[22]

The Uruzgan political environment was consistent with the political framework described above. The Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) concluded that "the influence of tribal powerbrokers, rather than merit-based processes, is responsible for appointments to nearly all key positions in Uruzgan, including that of Governor and the Directors of most line departments."[23]

Government positions at the provincial and district levels were dominated by members of the Popalzai tribe. The Popalzai leaders sought to maintain power by marginalizing leaders from other tribes as well as former Taliban leaders. Members of the Nurzai, Barakzai, and Achakzai tribes were not well represented in the government at any level. This lack of tribal representation created suspicion and hindered efforts to build a trusted government.[24]

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[18] Author's map, 31 January 2011.

[19] James Brown, "Karzai and McChrystal Visit Uruzgan," *Interpreter*, 23 March 2010; and "Karzai and McChrystal Visit Uruzgan: Nobody Cares," *Crikey*, 25 March 2010.

[20] Author's notes, travel book, 13 December 2010.

[21] Schmeidl, *The Man Who Would Be King*.

[22] Schmeidl, *The Man Who Would Be King*, 11.

[23] *Comprehensive Needs Assessment for Uruzgan Province, Afghanistan: Final Report* (Canberra: Australian Agency for International Development, 2010), 18; and *Uruzgan Provincial Update* (Kabul: Liaison Office, 2010).

An interaction that the author had with Afghan government officials and tribal elders exemplifies the tribal differences in Uruzgan. In April 2011, the CTU leadership, accompanied by the provincial chief of police, Brigadier General Shirzad, and the ANA brigade commander, Brigadier General Zafar Khan, flew out to inspect a new base being constructed by the ANA (with minimal Coalition assistance) at Forward Operating Base (FOB) Heydara, near Kalatak on the road between Khas Uruzgan and Tarin Kowt. The ANA was in consultation with the local elders regarding base positioning and future cooperation. To facilitate this discussion, the CTU interpreter simultaneously translated what the local elders were saying in Dari to the ANA battalion commander in Pashto and back into English.[25] A very high level of near simultaneous translation was required for the simplest conversations, even between Afghan citizens and their own security forces.

Tribal inclinations also influenced how CTU operated on a political level. Coordinating efforts to enhance education was politically challenging due to tribal tendencies. The Hazara did not have access to enough education, as evidenced by overflowing schools and a thirst for more knowledge that was witnessed during numerous CTU visits to schools in Daykundi. Because of their conservative interpretation of Islam, Pashtuns in Uruzgan were generally highly suspicious of educational advancement, and many schools built in Pashtun areas were therefore unfinished and empty. The Barakzai accepted education as a necessity and sent their children to school but did not embrace it to the level seen in the Hazara regions. These generalizations provide examples of tribal attitudes that influenced Coalition decisions regarding how to distribute resources and prioritize activities.[26]

The Education System in Uruzgan

According to Save the Children Australia, an aid and development agency, "Uruzgan is one of the most under-served provinces in Afghanistan, with development indicators far below the national average."[27] Education systems in the province faced significant challenges in August 2010. Despite a "concerted effort, and considerable expenditure, by donors and the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to provide educational resources and infrastructure in the province . . . the difficulties of delivering better educational outcomes in Uruzgan [were] severe."[28] The challenges started at the top. The provincial minister for education, Malim Rahmatullah, was removed from his post after embezzling money from the education budget for his personal use prior to the arrival of CTU in the summer of 2010.[29] He was replaced by Qasim Popal, who was educated and motivated to reform the system but, in the author's assessment, was a weak leader.[30]

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[24] *The Dutch Engagement in Uruzgan: 2006–2010: A TLO Socio-Political Assessment* (Kabul: Liaison Office, 2010), 28.

[25] Dawood Bauer Alakozi, interview with author, 5 March 2022. Alakozi served as the author's personal interpreter from August 2010 to June 2011.

[26] Capt Margaret Nichols, ADF, interview with the author, 4 April 2011.

[27] *Access Restricted: A Review of Remote Monitoring Practices in Uruzgan Province* (Melbourne: Save the Children Australia, 2012), 3.

Given the education leadership challenges in Uruzgan, the approximate provincial literacy rate was 8 percent for boys and 0.3 percent for girls.[31] Schools that had been paid for by well-meaning but in many cases less-than-effective NGOs were largely incomplete.[32] Completed schools were in many cases devoid of teachers, students, and books due to a combination of inadequate funding, corruption, and lack of qualified teachers and published books. The Taliban and drug lords had assumed ownership of some schools and used their classrooms to dry the hashish grown in the districts, as was discovered by CTU in a school south of Deh Rawod in spring 2011.[33] Moreover, some schools had been built straddling tribal boundaries, which created cultural friction that prevented students from attending schools in their neighborhoods. Girls were also threatened by Taliban leaders and assaulted on their way to school because of the Taliban's harsh attitudes toward women.[34] When CTU offered to provide buses to ease transportation challenges, elders explained that the students in those buses would be targeted by the Taliban, which was intent on preventing educational improvements. Although the international community had devoted significant time, effort, and resources to improving the education system in Uruzgan, the end result was marginal improvement except for a few flagship schools, according to a 2013–14 report by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).[35] In 2012, Save the Children Australia reported:

> The provincial literacy rate is just 9% overall and 1.2% for women, well below the national rate of 26% overall and 12.5% for women. Youth literacy is less than 6%, compared to more than 20% in most other prov-

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[28] *Comprehensive Needs Assessment for Uruzgan Province*, *Afghanistan*, 38.

[29] Schmeidl, *The Man Who Would be King*, 26.

[30] *Comprehensive Needs Assessment for Uruzgan Province, Afghanistan*, 46.

[31] *Comprehensive Needs Assessment for Uruzgan Province, Afghanistan*, 38.

[32] *The Dutch Engagement in Uruzgan: 2006–2010*.

[33] Nichols, interview with the author, 18 March 2011.

[34] *Access Restricted*, 6.

[35] *Teaching and Learning: Achieving Quality for All Afghanistan*, EFA Global Monitoring Report (Paris: United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, 2014), 3.

> inces. School enrolment is also well below the national average of 58%, and the provincial enrolment rate for girls, at just 7%, is just a fraction of the national average of 44%. Efforts to get more girls into school face enormous obstacles, including societal norms which in more conservative communities have traditionally been opposed to girls' education.[36]

The Australian Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) worked with the Netherlands and the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF) to provide funding for the Education Quality Improvement Project (EQUIP).[37] Working together with Save the Children, these organizations were in the process of building as many as 90 schools in Uruzgan. Increasing girls' access to education as well as employing female teachers were both focus areas for NGOs in Uruzgan. To improve the quality of education throughout the province, the PRT worked with its partners to provide scholarships, recruit new teachers and female teachers, and send teachers to India for advanced training.[38] The education system in Uruzgan required significant improvements. The PRT worked to overcome security, cultural, logistical and other obstacles to provide better access to education and improve the quality of instruction.

The Health Care System in Uruzgan

The health care system in Uruzgan also required significant improvement. Save the Children and AusAID worked together to improve the welfare of all citizens in Uruzgan with a special focus on women and children. The Afghanistan National Health Workforce Plan stated that:

> According to the Dutch, access to healthcare in Uruzgan lags far behind national averages, with just 2.2 healthcare professionals per 10,000 people, compared to the national average of 14.6 per 10,000 people. If [community health workers] are included, this ratio increases to 17 per 10,000, compared to a national average of 22 per 10,000.[39] Also as in the education sector, access to healthcare is substantially more restricted for women than it is for men. Just 21 percent of healthcare professionals in the public sector are female.[40] There are no practicing female doctors outside Tirin Kot [*sic*], and no female surgeons, head nurses or dentists anywhere in Uruzgan.[41]

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[36] *Access Restricted*, 5.

[37] *Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund: Quarterly Report to ARTF Donors* (*June 22, 2010 to September 22, 2010*) (Washington, DC: World Bank Group, 2010).

[38] *Comprehensive Needs Assessment for Uruzgan Province, Afghanistan*, 40.

[39] *Afghanistan National Health Workforce Plan, 2012–16* (Kabul: Ministry of Public Health, Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, 2011), 4, 9.

[40] "Afghanistan Health and Development Services," Basic Package of Health Services (BPHS) Uruzgan quarterly report, n.d., 9–11.

[41] "Afghanistan Health and Development Services," 10–11.

Based on this assessment, AusAID identified several priority areas: improve access to basic health services, particularly for women; improve the quality of healthcare services; improve access to clean water and sanitation facilities; and reduce the extent of malnutrition, particularly amongst children under five years of age.[42]

The PRT worked closely with Save the Children to improve health care in Uruzgan. Clinics were funded to provide minimum care, but maintaining oversight and quality control was difficult, especially in the remote villages and districts outside of Tarin Kowt.[43] Save the Children was protective of its position as the responsible agency for health care, which created friction with CTU. CTU leadership visited various clinics that were not performing to standard. When the PRT and CTU leadership visited the district clinic in the remote district of Khas Uruzgan to confirm reports of inadequate care, they found a relatively new building with enough funding to have necessary staffing and equipment. After entering the compound, they discovered that all the equipment and medicine had been sold on the black market, and the doctors and nurses had left a vacant building behind.[44] Lack of oversight and government control in this remote district made sustaining quality healthcare extremely challenging.[45]

There was also a difference in the healthcare philosophies that were expressed by the implementing NGOs and CTU. The NGOs believed that health care capacity should be developed from within existing Afghan medical capabilities.[46] This translated to poor care on the ground. For example, a young girl who had broken her arm could not be treated properly at the Afghan clinic in Tarin Kowt. CTU sent doctors to the clinic to train and mentor the local team there. When the doctors saw the girl's condition, they brought her to Camp Holland for treatment, which ultimately saved her arm. The Save the Children representatives were not happy with CTU's interference and apparently would have preferred that the girl remain in local care and lose her arm rather than be sent to the Role 2 medical treatment facility at the NATO base.[47] The health care NGOs believed that CTU was preventing the local clinic from building capacity. About a week later, the father of the girl came back to Camp Holland to report Taliban activity in his area. The CTU leadership assessment of this action was that the father was grateful to the Coalition for helping his daughter. The father's report resulted in the capture of several Taliban fighters and the prevention of a planned attack against CTU's

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[42] *Comprehensive Needs Assessment for Uruzgan Province, Afghanistan*, 30.
[43] *Access Restricted*, ii.
[44] Nichols, interview with the author, 8 March 2011.
[45] Author's notes, book 4, 4 October 2010.
[46] Nichols, interview with the author, 10 May 2011. For more on role support, see "Medical Support," in NATO *Logistics Handbook* (Brussels: NATO, 1997), chap. 16.
[47] Nichols, interview with the author, 4 October 2010.

U.S. Army maneuver element, 1st Squadron, 2d Cavalry Regiment. The difference in approaches between the international medical community and CTU leadership regarding how much assistance should be provided to local citizens is representative of the political dynamics between the Coalition entities operating with CTU.

From a more basic perspective, health care in Uruzgan suffered from a lack of knowledge about basic sanitary practices. The province's infant mortality rate was estimated to be 37 percent for children under the age of five, primarily due to complications with unsanitary water. As many as 50 percent of the population suffered from food insecurity.[48] When the author patrolled with the U.S. special operations unit working with CTU, Task Force 34, in Kalach in the fall of 2010, he patrolled along a pristine blue river that wound its way through the valley. The river started near Gizab and flowed into the Tiri Rod River near Chora. An avid fly fisherman, the author was curious to see if there was good fishing in the river, so he brought his fly-fishing rod back to Uruzgan after the holiday break. On his next visit to the river, he brought his ANA partner, Brigadier General Zafar Khan, along to teach him how to fish. The pair ended up catching four fish and were feeling pretty good about themselves until the local tribal elder arrived with a bucket full of fish that he had picked up out of the river after attaching one end of his jumper cables to his truck battery and the other end to the river. Shocked fish float! While at the river, which was upstream from the town, the author noticed many piles of human excrement.[49] In following discussions with the local leaders, he discovered that they did not boil their water before use, that washing hands was not considered important, that washing food fertilized by excrement was not practiced, and that basic hygiene skills were neither known nor practiced. Much of the health care problems in Uruzgan could have been solved by basic education and disciplined hygiene. The province's infant mortality rate could be dramatically reduced by following simple water treatment practices.[50]

To improve health care in Uruzgan, the PRT coordinated with donors and NGOs to work with the Afghan Ministry of Public Health on health services and infrastructure. These organizations were able to establish 5 comprehensive health centers, 6 basic health centers, 1 subhealth center, and 167 health posts in all provincial districts. The Afghan Center for Training and Development, the Dutch NGO Health Net International, and the Humanitarian Assistance and Development Association for Afghanistan, a local NGO, all cooperated to provide training for community nurses, pharmacists, and technicians. The hospital in Tarin Kowt was renovated. The UN World Food Programme, Cordaid, the Afghan Health and Development Services, and the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) worked together to improve food security in Uruzgan. AusAID supported the school health education program to help improve water sanitation and hygiene in Uruzgan.[51] CTU medical staff worked extensively with ANA doctors and ANSF personnel to improve medical and first aid skills. In the end, progress toward a healthy society in Uruzgan was achieved despite numerous setbacks and challenges.

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[48] *Comprehensive Needs Assessment for Uruzgan Province, Afghanistan*, 30.
[49] Nichols, interview with the author, 7 March 2011.
[50] *Comprehensive Needs Assessment for Uruzgan Province, Afghanistan*, 31.

The Agricultural System in Uruzgan

Uruzgan has no significant industry outside of agriculture.[52] During CTU's operating period, by far the largest cash crops were poppy and opium derivative products. The soil, water, and climate in the lush valley floors of the province are ideal for growing many different alternative crops. Primary crops include wheat, corn, barely, rice, potatoes, melons, and oilseed almonds.[53] Historical crops included almonds, walnuts, apricots, figs, and many other crops that grew in the region. These crops were delicious, but were used for sustainment primarily rather than trade. The Dutch, Australians, and U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) worked hard to institute other cash crops such as saffron and winter wheat with marginal success. The production of almonds provided an exceptional opportunity for cash crop development, but the processing plant that the Dutch helped build in Chora never maximized its potential.[54] The situation in Uruzgan was primed for a growing agricultural breadbasket. The profits to be made through poppy production, however, made new crop production or improved techniques and technology difficult to institute. In fact, according to a 2006 Cordaid survey, "an analysis of the economy in Uruzgan is complicated by the size of the illicit economy, which has grown considerably in the last years."[55]

In March 2012, the CTU leadership team of approximately 15 officers and civilians had lunch at the *quala* (a family compound, usually made of adobe walls surrounding a living area for extended families) of Mohammad Nabi Khan, an influential tribal leader based in the region between Chora and Tarin Kowt.[56] Nabi Khan was a weathered gentleman of about 50 years of age with slightly graying hair. Despite being a man of few words, he commanded the respect of other leaders and was influential throughout Uruzgan. His quala was one of the largest of its kind and was perched atop a hill overlooking the valley. He had created a patio space on the hillside with a grape-laden arbor for shade. As the CTU leadership sat crosslegged around the carpet under the arbor, Nabi Khan laid out an amazing lunch of stewed goat, rice with raisins, and fresh fruit and grapes. A stream of young boys brought the food from the kitchen and delivered it straight to the guests' plates by walking barefoot down the middle of the carpet "table" in true Afghan form.

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[51] *Comprehensive Needs Assessment for Uruzgan Province, Afghanistan*, 33–34.

[52] *Ten Years Later: An Assessment of Uruzgan Province a Decade after the Dutch Military Departure* (Kabul: Liaison Office, 2020), 20.

[53] *Comprehensive Needs Assessment for Uruzgan Province, Afghanistan*, 31.

[54] "Afghan Almond Farmers Get Cracking," North Atlantic Treaty Organization, 12 April 2013.

[55] *Ten Years Later*, 19.

[56] Nichols, interview with the author, 3 May 2011.

During lunch, the group had an excellent discussion regarding the potential for agriculture in Uruzgan and how to capitalize on the natural resources of the province's valleys. The conversation lasted more than an hour and touched on different ways that the Afghan government could help incentivize legitimate crops. Nabi Khan was appreciative of Coalition efforts to help train, educate, and assist local growers of various crops. Since the author's arrival in Uruzgan, he had built a positive relationship with Nabi Khan despite the latter's involvement in the poppy industry, so he felt that he could ask him direct questions and get truthful answers. After dessert, the author looked out over Nabi Kahn's expansive property and asked, "Nabi Khan, why after this engaging discussion about the potential of Uruzgan, do I look out over your fields and see only the red and white scourge of poppies? How is it that you can preach the Koran on one day and violate its edicts about the immorality of drugs on the next? How can you justify the harm of your small children who harvest the poppy tar and become addicted?"[57] His only response was a wry smile and the rubbing of his thumb and forefinger together. Despite tremendous potential, improving the agriculture situation in Uruzgan was not an easy task.

The PRT implemented several programs to improve the agricultural economy in Uruzgan. Programs were instituted to improve production and access to markets by increasing wheat production, improving the marketing of Uruzgan products, and promoting livestock husbandry opportunities. The PRT provided rural farmers with access to credit, business support services, and market information to help with production decisions. Because road and transportation infrastructure inhibited the delivery of crops to market, much of the development activities centered around road rehabilitation. Water infrastructure improvements and access to electricity also helped improve farming processes in Uruzgan.[58] The international community recognized the potential for agricultural improvement and worked diligently to help create a more productive province.

The Afghan Police in Uruzgan

The Afghan provincial police in Uruzgan were moderately effective and rife with corruption and abuse of power. They were commanded by Brigadier General Juma Gul Hemat, who wielded an oversized presence coupled with a heavy-handed influence in the province. Hemat was raised in Deh Rawod and shared a long history with the local leaders and tribal elders there. His police force was accused of conducting night raids on locals, skimming gas rations, and padding his payroll by expanding the budget for fictitious policemen. Although the major urban areas of Uruzgan were relatively secure, the police presence in the rural farmland was less evident. New Afghan police officers were trained at a police induction academy located at Camp Holland. The academy was administered by the European Union Police Mission in Afghanistan (EUPOL Afghanistan), which provided Norwegian and Swedish police officers to plan, develop, and oversee the training.[59] The EUPOL Afghanistan team was augmented by Australian police officers who also deployed to Afghanistan.[60] The author's impressions of the new Afghan police officers were that they were highly motivated and well trained at the academy. However, when they were sent to their new posts, it seemed that they were treated poorly by harsh leaders who were less than effective. Each district had police chiefs who reported to Hemat. The district police chiefs maintained order in the urban centers but were less effective in the rural areas. In general, the Afghan police in Uruzgan were capable of securing the city centers but did so through rough treatment of civilians, which inhibited their ability to earn the respect and support of the local population.

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[57] Nichols, interview with the author, 3 May 2011.

[58] *Comprehensive Needs Assessment for Uruzgan Province, Afghanistan*, 49–50.

Brigadier General Hemat's authority was challenged by the KAU, a private security organization under the command of Afghan National Police (ANP) colonel Matiullah Khan. The KAU was used to augment Coalition operations in support of both U.S. Special Forces Task Force 34 and Australian Special Forces Task Force 66. The KAU also secured Route Bear, the primary route between Tarin Kowt and Kandahar. Although helpful, the KAU was a constant source of friction for the ANP because its soldiers performed police tasks but did not report directly to Hemat, the chief of police. Matiullah Khan was the nephew of the warlord Jan Mohammad Khan, a notorious figure who was a former provincial governor of Uruzgan, a ruthless tribal elder, and an influential advisor in Kabul.[61] The friction between the ANP and KAU was further exacerbated by the difficulty in determining the exact force structure and manning levels of both organizations. Matiullah Khan was a Robin Hood-like figure in that he took care of the people in his tribe while charging exorbitant fees to secure Coalition logistics vehicles as they made their way north from Kandahar. He was a staunch Coalition supporter who assisted with both U.S. and Australian special forces operations throughout the region on a regular basis. There were two sides to his character. On one hand, he was accused of murder and extortion.[62] On the other hand, he was praised for his support of women and families during his Thursday night shuras. Matiullah Khan theoretically worked for Hemat, but in reality he was an independent operator commanding approximately 2,500 KAU soldiers who were primarily responsible for securing the main supply route between Kabul and Tarin Kowt. He was effective in providing security for Coalition convoys, although there was a sense that if he did not receive the contract he wanted, the KAU could create insecurity along the route.

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[59] *The EU Police Mission in Afghanistan: Mixed Results* (Luxembourg: European Court of Auditors, 2015), 42.

[60] "AFP [Australian Federal Police] in Afghanistan," Nautilus Institute for Security and Sustainability, 28 December 2010.

[61] Schmiedl, *The Man Who Would Be King*, 28. Jan Mohammad Kahn had been removed from office as provincial governor of Uruzgan in 2006 by President Karzai at the behest of the Dutch government due to corruption in his administration.

The Dutch response to dealing with the Afghan police forces in Uruzgan had been to ignore them because of their corrupt activities. The CTU approach was to work with them, recognizing them for what they were while guarding against their rampant corruption. CTU worked closely with Brigadier General Hamet; his successor, Brigadier General Shirzad; and Colonel Khan to professionalize their police officers and cooperate on security matters. Working with the police required building relationships with leaders who possessed flawed characteristics. Coalition leaders had to learn to accept positive aspects and understand how to and when to compromise to reach specific objectives.[63]

The Afghan Army in Uruzgan

The 4th Brigade of the ANA's 205th "Hero" Corps, commanded by Brigadier General Abdul Hamid, was responsible for security in Uruzgan outside the province's major population centers. The corps was responsible for security in the provinces of Kandahar, Zabul, Uruzgan, and Daykundi in southern Afghanistan and consisted of approximately 19,000 soldiers divided into four infantry brigades.[64] Its main effort against the Taliban was in Kandahar, where its corps headquarters was located, while operations in Uruzgan and Daykundi were seen as supporting efforts. Hamid was a leader who motivated his soldiers and continued to improve his unit despite many challenges.[65] He had earned the respect of his soldiers, the local elders, and the population of Uruzgan. In September 2010, he was promoted to corps commander and replaced by Brigadier General Zafar Khan, who had received training in the Soviet Union earlier in his career and was considered a harsh authoritarian. Zafar Khan was loyal to the Afghan government and the Coalition but was not well respected by the soldiers under his command. The brigade was deployed with infantry kandaks (battalions) in Chora, Deh Rawod, and Tarin Kowt and additional supporting elements in Tarin Kowt.[66] The brigade was assessed by the Australian Mentoring Task Force (MTF) 2 as "effective with assistance."[67] In other words, when these Afghan units were partnered with Coalition troops, they operated effectively, but they lacked the necessary leadership to operate independently. One exception was the commander of the 2d Kandak, Lieutenant Colonel Gul Agha, whose exceptional competence and respect led to his selection as the acting district chief of Chora during an interim period between the time the previous district chief had been dismissed and a new chief nominated by President Karzai was selected.[68]

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[62] Nichols, interview with the author, 16 May 2011.

[63] "Defence Statement to ABC Four Corners Program *In Their Sights*, 5 September 2011," Australian Department of Defence, 6 September 2011. The following quote provides background to the nuanced relationship with Matiullah Kahn: "As part of ISAF efforts to help stabilise Afghanistan, Australian forces regularly engage with a wide range of tribal and community leaders in Uruzgan in an inclusive and impartial way. In this setting, Matiullah Khan is one of many influential figures that Australians have engaged. Australia works with such individuals in a way to ensure that their influence is used positively, in support of governance and security in Uruzgan. In the time that the [Australian Defense Force] has worked in Uruzgan, Matiullah Khan has headed the Kandak Amniante Uruzgan (KAU), a private security organisation which provides contracted security in some parts of Uruzgan for the Ministry of Interior. On 7 August 2011, the Afghan Ministry of Interior announced that Matiullah Khan was appointed Uruzgan Provincial Chief of Police. Since his appointment to this position, Australian officials have engaged Matiullah Khan in his official capacity, including the Special Operations Task Group (SOTG) which mentors Uruzgan's Afghan National Police Provincial Response Company–Urzugan."

[64] "Afghan National Army (ANA) Order of Battle," GlobalSecurity, accessed 11 November 2022.

[65] The author worked closely with BGen Hamid while they were partnered in Uruzgan. Hamid was the former commander of 4th Brigade, 205th Corps.

Beyond leadership issues, there were also operational realities that impacted 4th Brigade operations. For example, the brigade had an artillery battery that was mostly ineffective, owing to one of its D-30 122-millimeter howitzers' (a Soviet-era towed artillery cannon) breeches having been destroyed. In mid-2011, the howitzer was finally made operable again through the initiative of an Australian mentor who found the necessary part on eBay in Poland. The brigade's transportation unit was effective only as long as the maintenance of a fleet of Ford Ranger pickup trucks held up. Being in the field without access to a steady stream of supplies demanded a high degree of resourcefulness on the part of everyone involved. To maximize ANA unit effectiveness, CTU enabled and encouraged Coalition subordinates to use their own initiative to help Afghan units expand their capabilities. From a leadership perspective, subordinate CTU leaders who were empowered to act on their own initiative took great pride in the ANA's improvements.

There were other supporting ANA elements that continued to improve under Australian mentorship but were mostly ineffective without supervision. The 4th Brigade's garrison had been slated for renovation, but the contract was poorly managed and so the officers and soldiers lived in substandard conditions. The brigade consisted of mostly Pashtuns, which caused language challenges with the predominantly Dari-speaking Barakzai locals. The brigade was generally effective, but achieving a high level of performance demanded mentoring, earning the trust and support of the local population, and constant vigilance regarding ways to improve as conditions changed. In June 2012, the brigade was rated as "independent without partnership."[69]

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[66] Author's map, June 2011. This map is annotated with all kandak locations.
[67] "Mentoring Task Force 2 Assessment as of June 2011," Mentoring Task Force 2 report, June 2011.
[68] Author's notes, travel book, 3 October 2010.
[69] "Transition Milestone in Uruzgan Province," Parliament of Australia, 26 March 2013.

The Taliban in Uruzgan

The enemy in Uruzgan took on several forms. In August 2010, the Taliban controlled rural valleys throughout the province and threatened the population both in Tarin Kowt and the rural outlying districts. The special forces detachment at FOB Anaconda in Shahid-e Hassas fired more rounds than anyone else in theater, which highlights the intensity of Taliban operations in the region. Transportation had been shut down from Tarin Kowt to the districts of Gizab, Khas Uruzgan, and Shahid-e Hassas and limited to Chora and Deh Rawod.[70] The district of Saraw, on the other side of the mountain pass west of Deh Rawod, had ceased to exist when the Taliban hanged its tribal elders in 2006.[71] With a lack of transportation and trucking, bazaars across the province were largely empty of needed food and supplies. Numerous threatening letters were left by the Taliban on doorsteps in the night, referred to as "night letters." On the author's first visit to FOB Wali, Australian troops in the Mirabad Valley requested helicopter support for a patrol pinned down by Taliban fighters. Helicopter pilots responded by flying to the contact site and engaging the enemy forces with machine gun fire from their helicopter as it hovered 100 feet above the friendly troops in contact.[72] The Taliban restricted contact with Kandahar to such a degree that transporting supplies from Kandahar to Tarin Kowt required a full battalion-size Coalition patrol, which took up to 22 hours to travel fewer than 200 kilometers.[73] Numerous ambushes combined with Coalition and Afghan casualties along the route forced Coalition leaders to enhance security, which slowed convoys down along the route. The situation was not dire, but it was certainly challenging.

Australian Special Forces Task Force 66 was responsible for direct action against Taliban elements in Uruzgan. CTU coordinated directly with the task force to conduct counterinsurgency and counterterrorism operations against Taliban forces.[74] Task Force 66 focused on Taliban leadership, narcotics operators, and other insurgent elements threatening security and stability in Uruzgan. In addition to the Taliban, the Afghan government and Coalition activity in Uruzgan had fanned historical local and tribal frictions. There were arguments and acts of violence associated with contract approvals or disapprovals, water rights associated with dam construction, corruption at the provincial and district levels,

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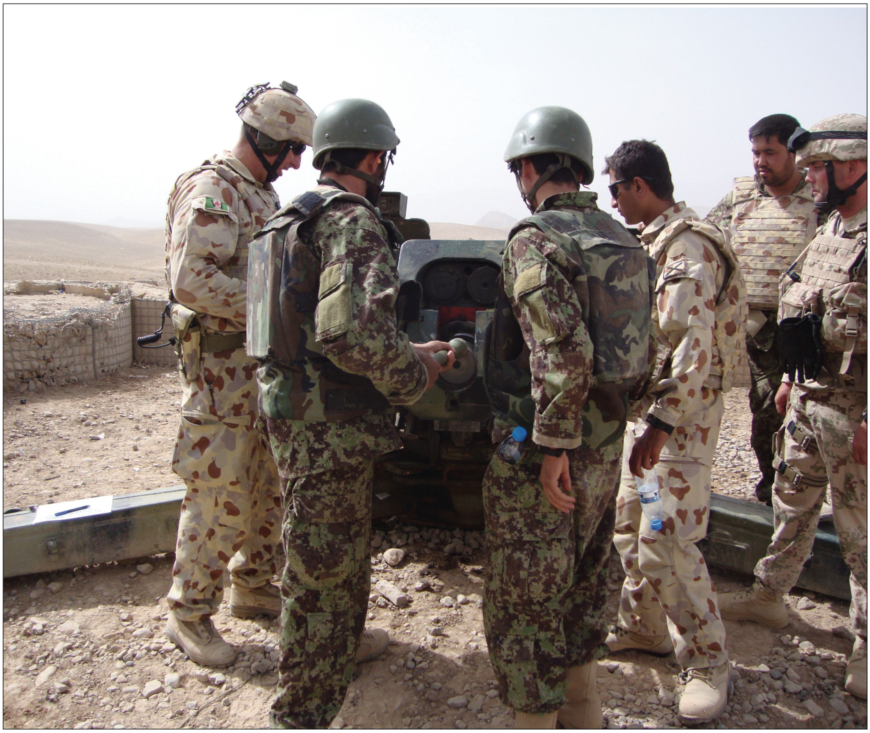
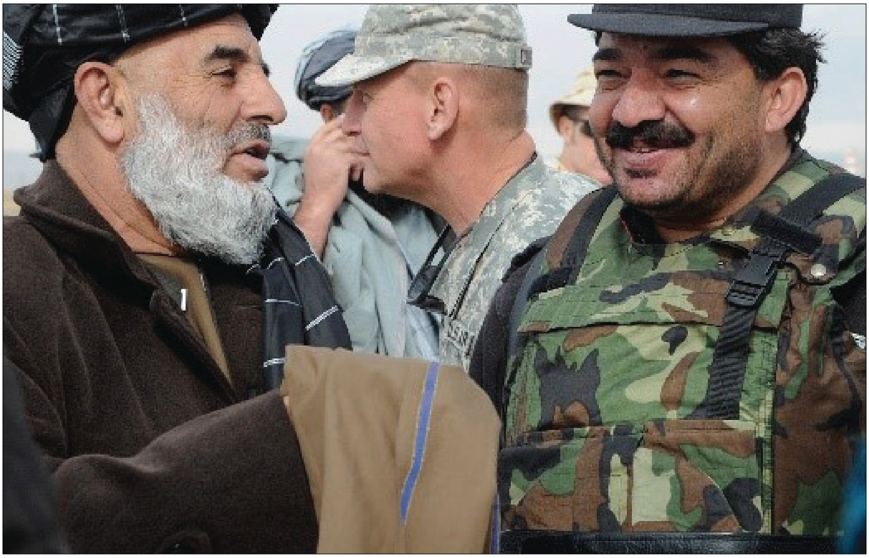
[70] Author's notes, travel book, 29 March 2011.
[71] "USAID Sar-Ab Municipal Refurbishment Bazaar Repairs: Cash for Work," Special Operations Task Force 34 and United States Agency for International Development operational report, 3 May 2011; and author's notes, travel book, 29 March 2011.
[72] Author's notes, book 2, 2 July 2010. This battlefield circulation trip occurred on 2 July 2010. It emphasized the urgency required for securing the Mirabad Valley.
[73] The last Dutch resupply convoy briefing prior to the CTU operational handover revealed the tenuous lines of communication between Tarin Kowt and Kandahar.
[74] Maj Ian Langford, ADF, "Australian Special Forces in Afghanistan: Supporting Australia in the 'Long War'," *Australian Army Journal* 7, no. 1 (2010): 21.

Figure 5. D-30 122-millimeter howitzer firing in Uruzgan



Source: courtesy of the author.

Figure 6. Jan Mohammad Khan and BGen Juma Gul Hemat



Source: courtesy of the author.

and other development and governance ineptitude that fueled simmering feuds.[75] Creating a stable environment in Uruzgan introduced challenges from both external Taliban actors and internal Coalition and Afghan government mismanagement.

Leadership Lessons Learned

Uruzgan is a complex rural province that is influenced by many contrasting and opposing forces. The hills are jagged, rugged deserts, while the valleys are lush green oases. Based on the author's interactions with the population and provincial leadership, the ANA was trusted in Uruzgan but the provincial police were not. The province's agricultural system brought in huge profits and boasted tremendous potential, but profits were achieved primarily by rich, poppy-growing warlords. Education was the number-one priority in the province's remote regions, made up of primarily Hazara tribes, but it was not as embraced in the larger population centers, made up of Pashtuns, especially for girls.[76] The provincial and district levels of government were primarily led by outsiders who ranged from competent and honest to ineffectual and corrupt and every other combination in between. Nothing was black and white. For every answer to a problem that is believed to be right, it either is half wrong—intentionally or not—or will change the next day. To determine how to build an effective organization in an ambiguous environment, leaders must be curious and skeptical, and they must listen carefully to the answers to many probing questions.

Leaders cannot always choose the environment in which they operate. The environment in Uruzgan was highly complex and ambiguous. Leading in this environment demanded focus, energy, huge amounts of patience, and the ability to adapt to a fluid situation. The CTU team quickly developed these characteristics as it coached its Afghan partners to help improve the lives of and prospects for the citizens of Uruzgan. Working together as a unified team, focused on a common vision, helped overcome the many obstacles to CTU mission success.

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[75] Nichols, interview with the author, 14 October 2010.
[76] *Ten Years Later*, 16.

CHAPTER 3

Combined Team Uruzgan Operational Overview, June 2010–June 2011

Combined Team Uruzgan (CTU) assumed operational status on 1 August 2010.[1] When the command was established, security concerns restricted Coalition operations to the population centers in Uruzgan Province's six districts, all of which were relatively secure. The hundreds of remote villages, roads, and rural areas throughout the province, however, were under Taliban control.[2] CTU's higher headquarters, International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) Regional Command South (RC South), was deeply committed to longstanding and fierce battles against the Taliban in Kandahar Province, to the south of Uruzgan. RC South deployed CTU to eliminate Taliban pressure from the north without taxing resources needed for the main effort in Kandahar.[3] To achieve this task, CTU was provided with adequate combat formations and resources from nine different countries. During an 11-month period from August 2010 through June 2011, CTU reduced enemy influence by suppressing the Taliban in the provinces of Uruzgan and Daykundi and paving the way for more effective governance, economic development, and social improvements.[4] With security zones expanded into valleys and remote areas and lines of communication opened, the government of Afghanistan had greater capacity to more effectively provide for their citizens and coordinate for expanded development opportunities.[5] This chapter defines the core CTU task organization and highlights the expansion of governance, development, and security as a result of CTU operations.

CTU Organizational Structure

As described in the previous chapter, CTU grew out of the need of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) to replace the 2,000 Dutch soldiers who departed Uruzgan as a result of the government of the Netherlands' decision to withdraw support to Afghanistan on 1 August 2010.[6] Numerous countries provided diverse organizational support and unique capabilities, complementing and supporting the

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[1] "Dutch Troops Leave Southern Afghanistan," CNN, 2 August 2010.

[2] Author's map of Uruzgan security situation, August 2010.

[3] Phil Stewart, "U.S. Braces for Kandahar Fight," Reuters, 11 August 2010.

[4] Author's maps of Uruzgan security situation, August 1010–June 2011.

[5] Combined Team Uruzgan security assessment briefing, June 2011. From February to June 2011, CTU Coalition teamwork created a stable environment for long-term projects and improvements in standards of living in the province's cities and rural areas. This briefing was coordinated between CTU and mentors from the Afghan National Army and Afghan National Police, benefitting from additional input from U.S. Special Forces Task Force 34 to gain a comprehensive assessment of security on the ground.

[6] Beatrice de Graaf, "The Dutch Mission in Uruzgan: Political and Military Lessons," *Alantisch Perspectief* [Atlantic Per spective] 34, no. 7 (2010): 18.

Afghan National Army (ANA) forces in Uruzgan, which filled out the CTU organizational structure.

CTU Support Elements

CTU was stationed at an airfield compound located approximately 1.5 kilometers south of the provincial capital of Tarin Kowt. The compound housed approximately 6,000 soldiers and civilians, including an ANA infantry brigade, an ANA special forces battalion, CTU headquarters and support elements, a U.S. special operations battalion, an Australian special forces battalion, an aviation battalion, numerous smaller units, and hundreds of contractors. The compound consisted of a 2,225-meter airfield that hosted regular military and civilian commercial flights as well as Camp Holland, CTU's base of operations.[7] Camp Holland was home to approximately 1,500 CTU soldiers and CTU headquarters, which was located in a 1.5-kilometer square subcompound on the western edge of the base. The base was isolated from the rest of the compound by a concrete barrier wall that was guarded by a Slovak infantry company. The compound was surrounded by a 16-kilometer rectangular perimeter that protected the airfield and its occupants. The perimeter was defended by Afghan contract guards who reported to the Australian-led Multinational Base Tarin Kowt. The compound was home to several units that had unique relationships with CTU. These organizations did not work directly for CTU but were readily available for support with coordination.

U.S. Special Forces Task Force 34 was assigned to ISAF Joint Command's (IJC) Special Operations Command to expand stability in rural villages and establish Afghan Local Police (ALP) forces. The task force operated in Uruzgan, Daykundi, and other adjacent provinces as directed by IJC. Task Force 34 focused on expanding rural lines of communications and establishing ALP outposts. It was initially commanded and manned by a U.S. Army Special Forces battalion, which was replaced by a U.S. Navy Sea, Air, and Land (SEAL) team in the winter of 2011. The agreement between CTU and IJC Special Operations Command was that all Task Force 34 operations had to be synchronized with CTU's vision, intent, and missions. Communication between Task Force 34 and CTU was continuous, as was coordination of both groups' operations and activities in Uruzgan and Daykundi.[8]

Australian Special Forces Task Force 66 was assigned to IJC Special Operations Command in the Afghan capital of Kabul, with its primary focus on direct action against insurgents and counternarcotics operations.[9] The task force operated in Uruzgan, Daykundi, and other adjacent provinces as directed by IJC. Like CTU's arrangement with Task Force 34, the agreement between CTU and IJC Special Operations Command was that all Task Force 66 operations had to be synchronized with CTU's vision, intent, and missions. Communication between Task Force 66 and CTU was continuous, as was coordination of both groups' operations and activities in Uruzgan and Daykundi.

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[7] "C-17 Landing at Tarin Kowt," Multinational Base Tarin Kot report, 2 April 2011.

[8] Author's notes, book 3, 8–9 September 2010.

[9] Maj Ian Langford, ADF, "Australian Special Forces in Afghanistan: Supporting Australia in the 'Long War'," *Australian Army Journal* 7, no. 1 (2010): 21.

The RC South aviation brigade stationed a multiplatform battalion at the airfield at Tarin Kowt. The Sikorsky UH-60 Black Hawk utility helicopters and Boeing AH-64 Apache attack helicopters based there were commanded and controlled by their higher aviation brigade-level headquarters in Kandahar. CTU was able to maximize the use of these aircraft assets for quick reaction, fire support, air movement, and medical evacuation requirements as needed.

CTU was also allocated fixed-wing tactical air support from multinational forces stationed in Kandahar. Support was based on specific missions but available at all times in emergency situations. CTU requests for rotary-wing air support went through RC South to the aviation brigade. With intense coordination, priority missions were normally approved, while routine missions were less reliable. Emergency situations such as troops in contact or medical evacuation were supported immediately without fail. This arrangement was satisfactory given the operational requirements in Uruzgan and Daykundi, but it was not without friction.

Afghan National Security Force Units

The Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) stationed three major units in Uruzgan. The 4th Brigade of the ANA's 205th "Hero" Corps consisted of four infantry *kandaks* (battalions), a support battalion, and a headquarters battalion with approximately 3,000 soldiers. The brigade was commanded by an ANA general officer, first Brigadier General Abdul Hamid and then Brigadier General Mohammed Zafar Khan. The brigade's headquarters was adjacent to Camp Holland at the Tarin Kowt air base. The 1st Kandak was stationed near Deh Rawood District; 2d Kandak, near Chora District; 3d Kandak, in Tarin Kowt District with responsibility for the Mirabad Valley; and 4th Kandak, at the provincial capital of Tarin Kowt. The remaining units were stationed at Tarin Kowt.[10] The brigade possessed its own artillery, engineer, and transportation units, all of which were steadily improving their capacity to effectively support the brigade.[11] The Tarin Kowt Provincial Police consisted of subordinate district police departments in the districts of Chora, Deh Rawood, and Khas Uruzgan, which together mustered approximately 2,700 police officers. The Kandak Amniante Uruzgan (KAU), an Afghan paramilitary organization comprising approximately 2,000 police officers, technically reported to the provincial chief of police, but this relationship was strained at best. The KAU was commanded by Colonel Matiullah Khan, who contracted his force to the Coalition for route security and support on special operations force missions.[12]

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[10] Author's map, January 2011. The unit locations were printed on the map for quick reference.

[11] "4th Brigade, 205th Corps Assessment Summary," Mentoring Task Force 2 report, June 2011.

The Afghan National Directorate of Security (NDS) in Uruzgan was responsible for gathering intelligence throughout the province. Commanded by Brigadier General Aziz Zakaria, the NDS consisted of fewer than 100 people stationed primarily in Tarin Kowt. The NDS was established on 1 January 2002 to gather and analyze intelligence in Afghanistan, with the organization's funding, training, and direction being provided by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA):

> The headquarters of the NDS was in Kabul, and it had field offices and training facilities in all 34 provinces of Afghanistan. The NDS was part of the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF). The NDS was mandated to investigate cases and incidents that affect Afghan national security and to fight terrorism. According to the Law on Crimes against Internal and External Security of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan, the agency is tasked to investigate cases involving "national treason, espionage, terrorism, sabotage, propaganda against the Government, war propaganda, assisting enemy forces, and organized activity against internal and external security." As the primary intelligence organ of Afghanistan, the NDS shared information about regional terrorism and major crimes with the Afghan ministries and provincial governors. Its activities were regulated according to the National Security Law.[13]

CTU Mission Statement and Commander's Intent

CTU's mission and commander's intent were initially crafted by the CTU staff in Kandahar in July 2010.[14] The mission defined what CTU was to achieve in support of the government of Afghanistan. The commander's intent described the purpose of the operation and the desired end state to allow subordinates to act independently while exercising imagination and initiative within the commander's overall mandate. In essence, the commander's intent described in broad terms how the commander envisioned accomplishing the mission. Both CTU's mission and commander's intent were reviewed periodically to adjust for changing guidance from RC South, CTU's higher headquarters, and operational considerations on the battlefield. CTU leadership reviewed its mission and progress monthly via internal discussions and briefings that highlighted progress and setbacks in Uruzgan and Daykundi. Existing plans were modified, and new plans developed based on opportunities discovered during this analysis. Likewise, CTU leadership discussed operational progress at least monthly with its higher headquarters, RC South, in Kandahar, to confirm that CTU was achieving the required effects in support of the larger mission. This process provided a means to developing a mutual understanding of CTU's ultimate purpose, which could be shared and understood by all members of the multinational formation.

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[12] Kate Clark, "Death of an Uruzgan Journalist: Command Errors and 'Collateral Damage'," Afghanistan Analysts Network, 25 April 2012.

[13] "National Directorate of Security (NDS)," Afghan War News, accessed 11 November 2022.

[14] Author's notes, book 2, July 2010; and author's map, June 2011. The commander's intent and CTU mission were published on all internally produced maps.

CTU Mission Statement

The CTU mission statement read:

> CTU conducts Counterinsurgency Operations (COIN) in support of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and Afghan National Security Forces to neutralize insurgent activity in the CTU Area of Operations from August 2010–June 2011 to enable governance and development opportunities and consolidate security, setting the conditions for transition.[15]

This mission statement was developed based on a thorough analysis of the enemy situation, cultural dynamics, political realities, tribal impacts, and the social and developmental status on the ground. CTU leadership further analyzed missions and orders that were handed down from its higher headquarters as well as adjacent and theater orders and directives. Combining this information to understand the specified and implied tasks and how they fit into the overall operational scheme led to the creation of the CTU mission. From a leadership perspective, the most important aspect of creating the mission statement was to refine the verbiage so that it was detailed enough to capture the essential tasks yet simple enough to be understood by all soldiers in the formation. Created in a coalition environment, the CTU mission statement respected the orders and guidance of every contributing nation so that all soldiers could work together without violating their specific national guidelines. The mission statement also helped all subordinates communicate CTU's intentions with their Afghan partners. Afghan leadership was consulted on a regular basis as the CTU mission was being developed to ensure that CTU was operating in concert with their vision. Afghan feedback and input was solicited several times a week, during Wednesday morning provincial security meetings as well as other engagements.[16]

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[15] Author's map, June 2011.

[16] Author's calendar, August 2010–June 2011.

The Dutch had established an Operational Coordination Center, Provincial (OCCP), which was a 305-square-meter standalone building used to facilitate close cooperation between the provincial government, the ANSF, and Coalition forces.[17] Tactical coordination between staff officers assigned to the OCCP occurred daily. On a weekly basis and when emergencies occurred, the senior leaders would meet at the OCCP to discuss the situation, coordinate, and make decisions. It was at these meetings that the vision and operational concepts were agreed to following detailed discussions.[18]

CTU Commander's Intent

The commander's intent serves as a directive from higher to lower headquarters that helps clarify an organization's purpose and end state. British Army field marshal William J. Slim, 1st Viscount Slim, explains that "I suppose dozens of operation orders have gone out in my name, but I never, throughout the war, actually wrote one myself. I always had someone who could do that better than I could. One part of the order I did, however, draft myself—the intention."[19]

More specifically, the commander's intent is used to provide guidance to subordinate units to allow them to act independently and maximize their resourcefulness. As commander of CTU, the author chose to communicate his intent by succinctly stating the purpose of each operation, the method that CTU would use to accomplish the mission, and the end state desired. A well-crafted commander's intent allows subordinate leaders to operate with less direct interaction and gives them freedom to take the initiative and assess risk because they can more readily determine if their actions meet the commander's intent. In his command role, the author wanted all subordinates to push the limits of their capabilities and look for innovative ways to maximize the potential of their commands. The author's commander's intent was derived from a thorough understanding of the intentions of both RC South and IJC combined with a detailed mission analysis of CTU's operational requirements that was conducted by the CTU staff. The author had the added advantage of having led the team that drafted the IJC operations order, Operation Omid (Hope) in October 2009, prior to being selected for command of CTU.[20]

The commander's intent is written in the first person for greater emphasis and is directed to all soldiers to empower them to act boldly in accordance with the expressed guidance. The commander's intent further identifies what the commander sees as the "center of gravity," or the single most important aspect of the operation.[21] In this case, the author saw the center of gravity in Uruzgan as the support that local leaders and citizens provided to the Taliban. If CTU was able to take away that center of gravity (local Taliban support), then the Afghan government could earn the respect of its people. With the support of local leaders and civilians, the Afghan government could progress and CTU's mission could be accomplished.

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[17] SrA Daryl Knee, USAF, "Coordination Center Disperses Life-Saving Information Region Wide," Army.mil, 12 December 2010.

[18] Author's calendar and notes, 1 August 2010–17 June 2011. These sources identify dates for briefings and provide the briefing notes used to synchronize Afghan and CTU plans and operations.

[19] *The Operations Process*, Army Doctrine Publication 5-0 (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2019), 1-9.

[20] Catherine Dale, *War in Afghanistan: Strategy, Operations, and Issues for Congress* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2011), 35. Dale contributed directly to this effort.

Printed below is CTU's commander's intent, which was reviewed quarterly to account for changes in the operational environment:

1. **Purpose:** Support the provincial governor's vision by enabling opportunities and consolidating progress in governance and development. Operations will reinforce the security gains made during Dutch occupation.
2. **Method:** The enemy's center of gravity is the localized support. [The Coalition] will defeat his center of gravity through:
    - Governance
        - Supporting and developing a credible provincial governor, line ministers, and district governance structures.
        - Supporting Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIRoA) activities.
        - Reinforcing legitimate Afghan rule of law and dispute resolution framework.
    - Development
        - Identifying new education initiatives.
        - Maintaining, completing, and identifying road projects.
        - Reinforcing health initiatives in key population centers and seizing health opportunities in outer districts.
        - Remediating and supporting existing and projected programs.
    - Security
        - Improving professionalism, competence, credibility, and capabilities of the Afghan National Army (ANA), Afghan National Police (ANP), and National Directorate of Security (NDS).
        - Disrupting insurgent networks.
3. **End state:** Provincial and district governance enhanced. Afghan quality of life improved through continued development activities. CTU area of operation (AO) is stabilized by a credible, professional, and capable ANSF focused on securing key population centers. Milestones for transition are defined and conditions set for transition.[22]

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[21] Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, trans. and ed., Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), 485–87.

[22] Author's map, 31 January 2011. The CTU commander's intent was printed on the map, which was produced by the Australian mapping team and distributed to subordinate CTU units.

CTU Operational Impact, February 2010–June 2011

The parliament of the Netherlands approved the deployment of Task Force Uruzgan and a Dutch Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) to Uruzgan in governance beginning on 1 August 2006. The Dutch concentrated on the "three Ds"—diplomacy, development, and defense. Between 2006 and 2010, they were able to establish security in the provincial capital of Tarin Kowt and the three district centers of Deh Rawod, Chora, and Khas Uruzgan. The Dutch coordinated closely with select Afghan government leaders, such as the provincial deputy governor, Khodi Rahim, and the local ANA commander, Brigadier General Abdul Hamid. They would not work with those they deemed to be corrupt, such as the Afghan National Police (ANP) commander, Brigadier General Juma Gul Hemat, or the local warlord and ANP colonel Matiullah Khan. Having established basic security in the population centers and facilitated coordination with some government leaders, the Dutch began to establish development projects and social programs in Uruzgan.[23]

CTU picked up where the Dutch left off. Beginning with the expansion of security between major population centers and the elimination of the most dangerous Taliban insurgents, CTU helped the ANSF earn the respect of the local population while paving the way for Afghan governmental presence into rural areas. With improvements in security and stability, CTU helped the provincial and district governments begin to provide governmental services. CTU assigned senior officers to work directly with the ANP, ANA, and NDS commanders as partners dedicated to improving the competency and effectiveness of each agency. The PRT was responsible for partnering with the provincial governor, district chiefs, tribal elders, and all Afghan ministry leaders. The PRT focused on helping the Afghan leadership improve systems, build infrastructure, reduce corruption, and establish more effective processes. The government in turn helped prioritize development activities coordinated by the PRT, which further improved economic and living conditions in the province.

CTU developed solid relationships with Afghan government leaders and tribal elders and partnered with the ANSF to work toward its goal of expanding security zones throughout the area of operations. CTU worked closely with these partners to capitalize on both the formal governmental aspects of local governance as well as the traditional informal tribal leadership that augmented official channels to solve problems in the province. With expanded security, the Afghan government reasserted its authority and began to address the most pressing concerns in each village and community. This level of trust building was essential to advancing governance. To address these issues, Afghan government ministries supported by Coalition and international organizations expanded the provision of basic services from the district and city centers into the most rural areas of Uruzgan.

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[23] Martijn Kitzen, "The Netherlands' Lessons," *Parameters* 49, no. 3 (Fall 2019): 42–44, https://doi.org/10.55540/0031-1723.2773.

The first map created by CTU depicts the period between February and August 2010, highlighting the work that the Dutch accomplished, which served as CTU's starting point (map 2). The second map, depicting August to September 2010, illustrates the impact of CTU's initial efforts to expand security along the major arteries leading to district centers (map 3). The third map, depicting October 2010 to February 2011, shows the impact of increased governmental action and developmental expansion stemming from improvements in security (map 4). The fourth map, depicting February to June 2011, provides a view of the security situation at the end of CTU's first year in theater (map 5). The maps use red shading to depict insecure areas primarily controlled by Taliban. Yellow shading indicated areas where the Afghan government had periodic control but where there was still Taliban influence. Green shaded areas depict those areas where the Afghan government was providing a stable environment for its people.

During their time in Uruzgan, the Dutch forces secured major population areas through difficult combat operations against the Taliban, working with the support of a nascent ANSF. The Dutch government established their three Ds approach of providing defense support, development cooperation, and diplomatic engagement.[24] While Dutch conventional forces and the PRT focused on the population centers, Dutch, Australian, and U.S. special operations forces concentrated on expelling the Taliban and then securing rural towns and villages. Transportation between major population centers was restricted by the presence of the Taliban, which prevented commerce and trade from growing. Consequently, *bazaars* (outdoor markets) were largely empty and basic supplies and goods were unavailable.

The CTU leadership approached Coalition operations differently than the Dutch. In contrast to the Dutch, CTU was committed to fully partnering with the Afghan government and tribal leaders in both the military and civilian sectors. CTU recognized that opening lines of communication among the population would expand the Afghan government's influence while enabling businesses to expand trade along the routes and more directly support the local economy. By partnering closely with the ANSF, CTU executed several combat operations to secure remote villages along critical routes as well as designated election polling centers.[25] These operations lasted anywhere from a few days to several weeks, and they did result in several Afghan, CTU, and special operations casualties and deaths.

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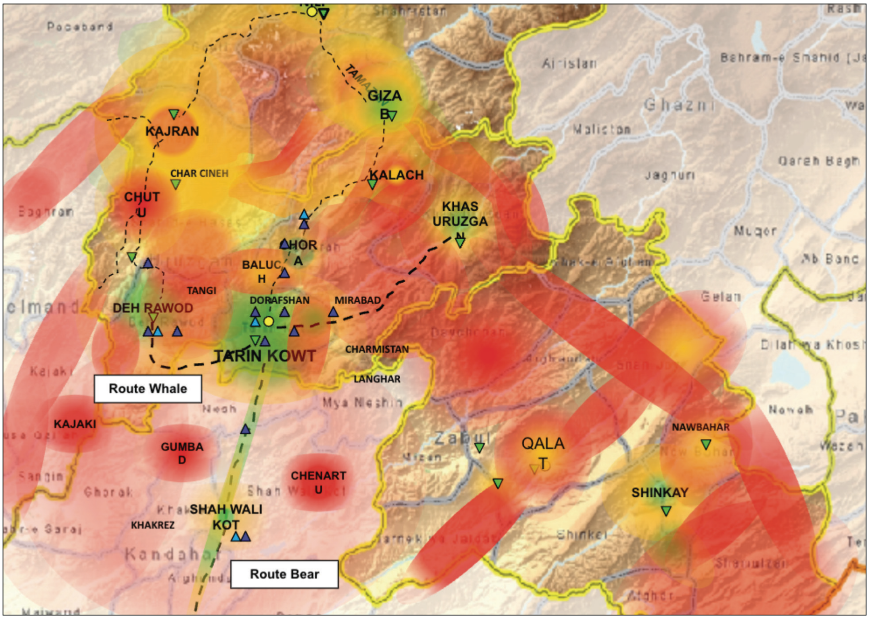
[24] Robbert Gabriëlse, "A 3D Approach to Security and Development," *Connections* 6, no. 2 (Summer 2007): 67, http://dx.doi.org/10.11610/Connections.06.2.02.

[25] Capt Margaret Nichols, ADF, interview with the author, 18 September 2010.

Map 2. CTU situation, February–August 2010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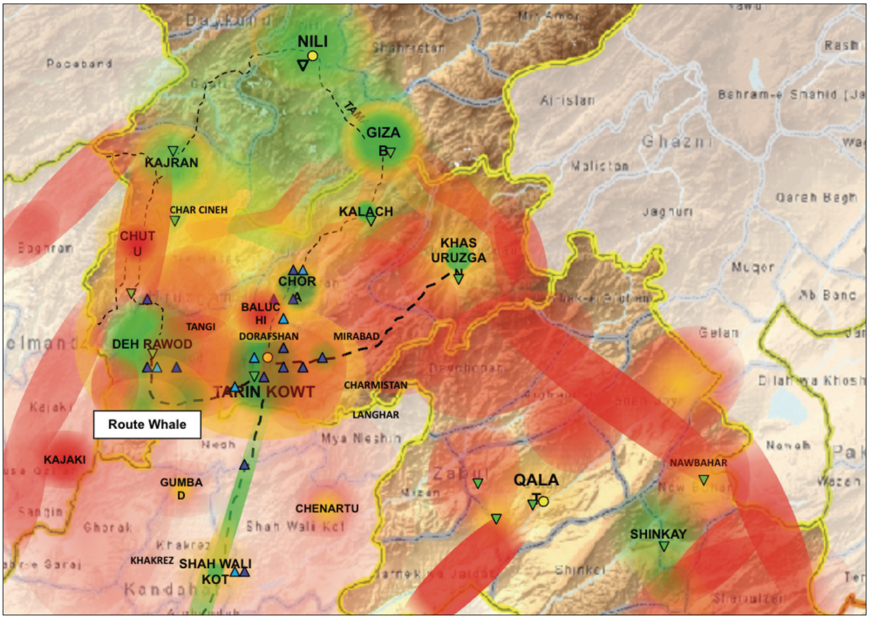
Dutch results.
Source: courtesy of the author.

Map 3. CTU situation, August–September 2010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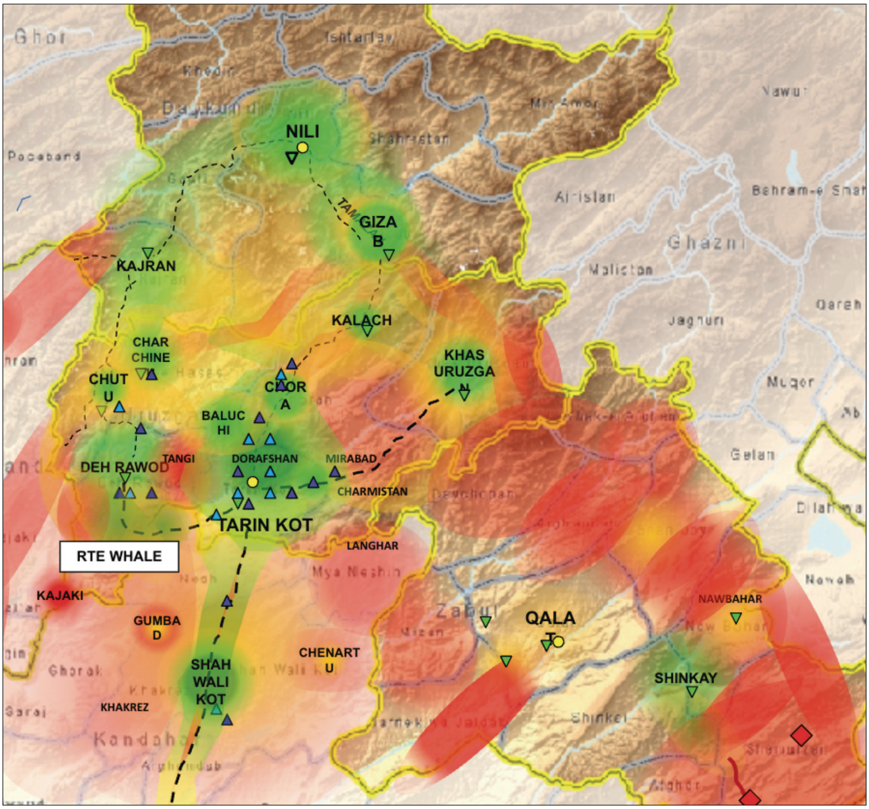
CTU takes charge.
Source: courtesy of the author.

Map 4. CTU situation, October 2010–February 2011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CTU security gains yield improvements in governance and development.
Source: courtesy of the author.

These sacrifices resulted in clearing the valleys that connected the major population centers. Simultaneously, CTU began intensive night patrols alongside its Afghan partners, which began to restrict traditionally safe times for the Taliban to threaten the local population. Night patrols and biometrics were tracked daily by district to ensure aggressive activity.[26] Although not immediately evident, CTU saw an improvement in security conditions as measured by an increase in vehicular traffic along these roads and a successful national parliamentary election process.

There were several aspects of Coalition leadership required to execute these operations. U.S. Special Forces Task Force 34 took the lead in coordinating with the 8th Afghan Special Operations Kandak and Matiullah Khan's KAU

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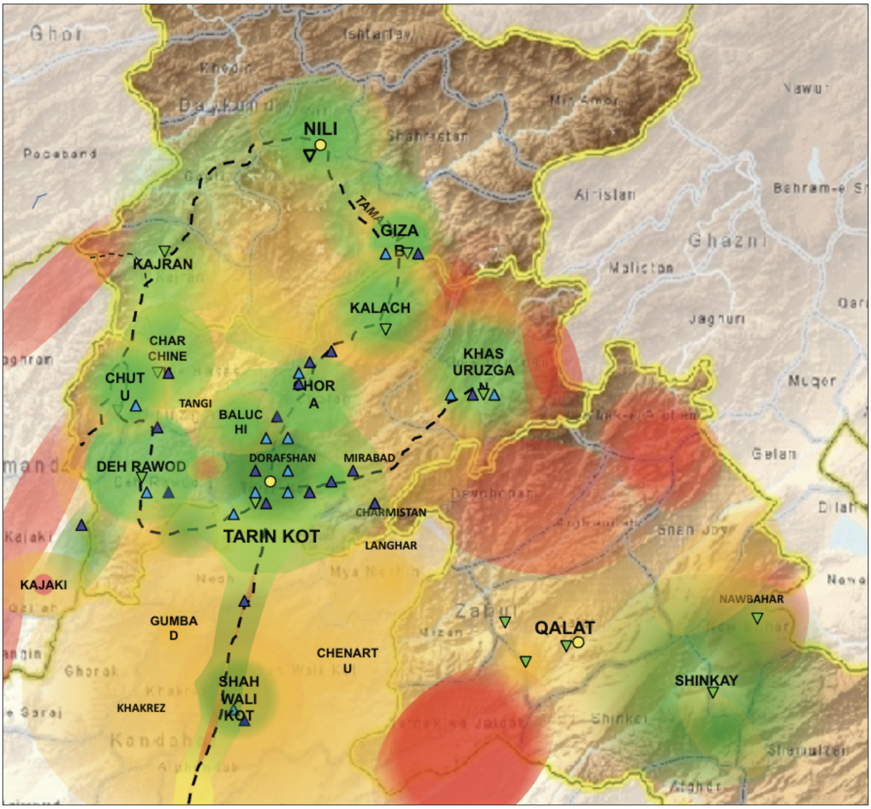
[26] Nichols, interview with the author, 10 March 2011. CTU used biometrics to identify insurgents using false names or identities.

Map 5. CTU situation, February–June 2011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Malistan
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Muqor
Gelan
Zabul
Shinkai

CTU Coalition teamwork creates a stable environment for long-term projects and improvements in standards of living in the cities and rural areas.
Source: courtesy of the author.

to expand security in the Chutu Valley and the Kajuran Pass.[27] Neither of these elements worked directly for CTU. Informal coordination based on personal relationships and agreements on how to use special operations forces was required to integrate operations conducted by CTU and special operations forces.

Clearing the village of Sarab and the Baluchi Valley was led by Afghan soldiers of 2d Kandak, 4th Brigade, 205th "Hero" Corps, with guidance from the Australian Mentoring Task Force (MTF) stationed in Chora. The impetus of this expansion was facilitated by working closely with the MTF and ANA leadership to ensure that the Australians only served in a mentoring capacity and did not lead or facilitate operations. Operations in Darafshanrud were led by 1st Kandak, 4th Brigade, 205th "Hero" Corps, with direct mentorship by the U.S. Army's 1st

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[27] "The 8th Afghan National Army Commando Kandak Operations," DVIDS, 10 April 2011; and Nichols, interview with the author, 31 October 2010. This interview covers the results of this clearance operation as briefed to IJC commander LtGen David M. Rodriguez.

Squadron, 2d Cavalry Regiment.[28] Coordination for this action was executed directly with the U.S. squadron commander, who then coordinated with his Afghan partners. Based on their different national guidelines, the U.S. commander had much more latitude to work with his Afghan counterpart than did the Australian commander.[29] At the CTU level, understanding how to approach each element with orders, requests, and synchronization was vital to combatting the Taliban and realizing the initial security expansion in Uruzgan. By addressing each Coalition commander in a tailored manner and respecting their engagement parameters, CTU conducted expansion operations in line with the stated vision.

Increased security and open roads enabled the Afghan government to interact regularly with the people of Uruzgan at the district and village level, as seen in map 4. The provincial governor held shuras (meetings of tribal elders) in each district and many small towns and villages.[30] Some of the shuras were held in the open or under a tree in small groups. Others, like the provincial shura, were attended by hundreds of people.[31] Shuras enabled the provincial governor, ministry leaders, and tribal elders to interact directly with the people in their districts. Problems were identified, discussed, and sometimes resolved. In these meetings, the ability for civilians to voice opinions and talk to government leadership directly helped soothe many issues, if not resolve them completely. On other occasions, problems such as water distribution or sanitation requirements were discussed and brought forward to the ministry level for eventual resolution. This level of engagement was a true confidence-building measure that allowed people living in the region to feel reassured and be more patient regarding potential resolutions to critical issues.[32]

The Coalition leadership learned two valuable lessons during this period: first, to exercise patience by recognizing that not all challenges could be solved quickly; and second, to accept Afghan solutions to problems that were not exactly appropriate when viewed from a Western perspective but were good enough when viewed from an Afghan perspective. The Coalition learned how to help build up Afghan capacity by allowing local agencies to take on as much responsibility as possible while augmenting local efforts to ensure some level of success. In many cases, CTU had the ability to execute a task to a much higher standard, but to do so would have diminished the Afghan opportunity for self-reliance.[33] Maximizing the opportunities created by initial security gains and enabling engagement by Afghan leadership and developmental opportunities yielded valuable improvements, as seen in map 4. This included the continued elimination or suppression of Taliban forces and their sympathizers, which offered a stabilized environment and paved the way for advancements in education, health, agriculture, law and order, and other forms of civil society-building. By walking the grounds and visiting numerous villages and towns, one could see the results emerging. The author recognized the beginnings of an environment in which citizens could feel safer, feed their families, educate their children, and experience improved living conditions.[34] The progress seen in Uruzgan was highlighted by bazaars that were filled with goods; lights dotting the hillsides, which had been absent before the arrival of CTU; and shuras that were focused on how to improve in the future rather than atone for the past.[35] There remained a great deal of work to be done, and the fragility of the situation remained evident, especially if Coalition partnership and support were to be taken out of the equation. From the author's personal perspective, by achieving its stated objectives, despite the difficulties, CTU demonstrated the potential impact that a Coalition force can have given effective leadership at all levels. A critical component to this effort revolved around developing an operating culture within CTU, one that was built on dedication toward building Afghan capacity and capability in line with the priorities of Afghan leadership. To maximize developmental opportunities, CTU collaborated with many national and international organizations such as the Save the Children; the United Nations (UN); the Australian, Dutch, and German foreign ministries, the U.S. Department of State, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the International Election Agency, and others.[36] Many of these organizations brought to the table their own unique experiences and expertise, as well as what they perceived as potential solutions to problems. Their perspectives were welcomed and instrumental, but in many cases these efforts caused as much damage as benefit. One example of this is the well-building effort in Chora, in which the Coalition built too many wells at the same depth and in the same aquifer in Chora, which caused the water source to dry up.[37] In another case, the Coalition built schools without proper quality assurance and control of teachers, which resulted in schools that were unfinished or unusable.[38] Some organizations attempted to initiate projects in areas that CTU had neither secured nor was in a position to secure in the near future. CTU worked closely with these organizations to overcome obstacles and improve the quality of assistance throughout the area of operations. Each governmental and nongovernmental organization (NGO) arrived in Uruzgan with their own culture, priorities, and ways of doing business. Each was confident that their approach was best and that their methodology worked well for their area of expertise. Working with these organizations to build a common set of priorities and a cooperative relationship helped ease friction and improve operational outcomes. CTU focused on communicating and coordinating intensely with a diverse group of teammates, molding the organization into a team that possessed a common vision and unifying mission, which yielded the results seen in map 4.

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[28] "Operation Badal (Clearance of the Baghtu Valley to Facilitate Key Leader Engagements)," 1st Battalion, 2d Stryker Cavalry Regiment report, 23 January 2011. Operation Badal was one of many operations aimed at sustaining stability in Durafshanrud.

[29] Author's notes, book 3, 8 September 2010.

[30] Author's notes and calendar, July 2010–June 2011.

[31] "Provincial Peace and Reintegration Shura," Provincial Reconstruction Team report, 27 March 2011. This shura was led by Governor Mohammad Omar Shirzad and attended by approximately 500 local elders as well as Afghan minister of interior affairs Bismullah Khan Mohammadi, Afghan minister of peace and reintegration Mohammed Masoom Stanekzai, former provincial governor of Uruzgan and tribal elder Jan Mohammed Khan, former provincial education director of Uruzgan Malim Rahmatullah. The shura aimed to connect the national and provincial governments so that they could more effectively solve problems as described by the provincial leaders.

[32] Nichols, interview with the author, 17 May 2011.

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[33] Author's notes, August 2010–June 2011. For example, during the provincial security meetings that were held weekly at the OCCP, the meeting's agenda, discussion, and process was Afghan-led. From the author's perspective, these meetings were inefficient and not well coordinated, but from an Afghan perspective, they offered an effective way to coordinate security activities in Uruzgan.

[34] Nichols, interview with the author, 28 May 2011.

[35] Author's notes, week 43, 29 May 2011.

[36] 1stLt Matthew Schroff, USA, "Provincial Reconstruction Team–Uruzgan, August 2010–July 2011," Uruzgan Provincial Reconstruction Team Staff Book, July 2011. This book was created by the PRT to catalog the people who served in the PRT and highlight the major events of the PRT in Uruzgan. It provides photographic evidence of the PRT members and their work.

[37] Autor's notes, book 4, 14 October 2010.

Continued Coalition support to Afghan government agencies yielded security expansion into the valleys and villages between the district centers and provincial capitals in Uruzgan and Daykundi, as seen in map 5. The provincial governors were able to make regular visits to district centers, presiding over shuras that were attended by hundreds of citizens in many cases.[39] The village of Saraw, which had been under Taliban control for six years, was finally liberated. Many Taliban fighters were welcomed back into society under an expansive reintegration program. CTU capitalized on the Afghan government's reintegration plan, which was managed in Kabul but administered by the provincial governors. Many young men who had fought for the Taliban surrendered and reintegrated into Afghan society. The provincial governor, working with district and tribal leaders, identified Taliban fighters who were interested in laying down their weapons and rejoining their communities under Afghan governmental leadership. By June 2011, this program was showing signs of success, as the provincial government had hosted several reintegration ceremonies.[40]

The leadership exercised by CTU enabled the Afghan government to begin to exert control over areas previously dominated by the Taliban. CTU leaders demonstrated what could be achieved with available assets and positive engagement—in particular, close partnership with government and tribal leaders, which helped maintain accountability and progress throughout Uruzgan and Daykundi. Afghan leaders and their Coalition partners developed close bonds while cooperating daily. Coalition partners had to learn how to accept a culturally sensitive Afghan solution that may not have been as effective as a Western solution but was far more impactful simply because it was Afghan. For example, the Coalition solution to legal issues was to establish a court and have issues decided by an appointed judge. But the Afghan shura, led by the provincial governor or tribal elders, could resolve such issues much more efficiently and effectively because the tribal council was the traditional and accepted method for resolving many issues. Coaching, convincing, and teaching Afghan leaders to take initiative and fight to correct corrupt practices helped them began to earn the respect of their citizens. More improvement was required, but significant progress could be seen throughout the region.

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[38] Nichols, interview with the author, 7 March 2011. At the north end of the Tarin Kowt airfield runway was a school that had been partially completed and then abandoned. When CTU leadership inquired about finishing the project, the response was that completion was impossible due to poor materials and workmanship in the existing structure. See "Opening of School Classes," Mentoring Task Force 2 report, 18–19 March 2011.

[39] Author's notes and calendar, August 2009–June 2010. Numerous shuras and district center meetings are recorded in the author's records, indicating the intense effort by the Coalition to assist the Afghan government in engaging with rural populations.

[40] "Prisoner Release Ceremony/Shura," Provincial Reconstruction Team report, 8 January 2011.

Importantly, bazaars in district centers, smaller villages, and along roads were open and stocked with goods. Commercial activity flourished, while more children returned to school and books, supplies, and teachers reached adequate levels in several areas. Families were able to purchase generators and lighting sets from bazaars. This last point was a particularly critical turning point in terms of the people’s outlook, as remote areas that only a few months earlier were left in complete darkness at night now had electricity and light.

CHAPTER 4

Selection for Command

Know Yourself

Deployment to Afghanistan

Prior to the author's arrival in Afghanistan in June 2009, he had spent the previous two years in South Korea as the chief of staff for the 28,000-soldier-strong Eighth U.S. Army and deputy commander (support) for the 10,000-soldier-strong 2d Infantry Division. After 27 years of service following his graduation from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point in 1982, he was seriously considering retirement. The gaping hole in the author's thought process was that although he had spent the previous eight years supporting the fights in Afghanistan and Iraq, he had only been to the theater on several visits and had not deployed there as an integral cog in any unit. He needed to go. The author was fortunate to be hired by the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) commander, U.S. Army general David D. McKiernan, as his strategic advisor. By the time the author got to Afghanistan, McKiernan had been removed from his command and replaced by U.S. Army general Stanley A. McChrystal.[1] After a few weeks in country, the author ended up as one of the original seven members of a new three-star operational headquarters, soon to be named ISAF Joint Command (IJC), in the Afghan capital of Kabul. He assumed his new role as the lead planner for IJC in August 2009.

As the lead IJC planner, the author had the privilege of coordinating, synchronizing, and writing plans that would shape the future of North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) involvement in Afghanistan for the next four to five years. He built a multinational team of 55 officers from the United States, Australia, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and other countries who, along with the entire Afghan planning team, led by Afghan National Army (ANA) colonel Najibullah, were tasked with writing the approximately 700-page plan for the expansion of NATO operations in support of Afghan governance, development, and security. Colonel Najibullah named the plan appropriately: Operation Omid (Hope). The author then had the opportunity to work with all NATO and other partner nations to design a civilian and military cooperation plan.[2] This plan was approved by all contributing embassies as well as General McChrystal as the first document to officially bring civilian and military operations together in a coordinated fashion. Although it was not perfect, and much more difficult to implement than to write, this plan laid the foundation for improvements across Afghanistan at the same time that ISAF was adopting counterinsurgency principles and expanding the size of the Coalition force in Afghanistan to more than 132,000 soldiers from 50 NATO and other contributing nations.[3]

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[1] Elisabeth Bumiller and Thom Shanker, "Commander's Ouster Is Tied to Shift in Afghan War," *New York Times*, 11 May 2009.

[2] Catherine Dale, *War in Afghanistan: Strategy, Operations, and Issues for Congress* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Office, 2011), 35.

The Dutch Government Decides to Withdraw from Uruzgan

In November 2009, the commander of IJC, U.S. Army lieutenant general David M. Rodriguez, asked the author to draft a plan that would ensure the security of ISAF Regional Command South (RC South) in the Afghan province of Uruzgan, located north of Kandahar.[4] The parliament of the Netherlands had decided that it would no longer provide the 2,000 Dutch soldiers needed to execute its "three Ds" strategy of defense, development, and diplomacy in the province.[5] The Dutch government provided a date for their departure: 1 August 2010. There was no apparent solution to the loss of a brigade-size element and a substantial Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Uruzgan, but there was also no alternative to replacing the Dutch contingent, as Uruzgan was a historic hotbed of Taliban activity, the home of Taliban leader Mullah Muhammad Omar, and a potential enemy staging base for operations against Coalition forces in Kandahar, who at the time were engaged in an extremely difficult fight.

Multinational forces are by their nature a compilation of units and organizations that possess different capabilities, levels of training and expertise, cultures, and priorities. These outfits are combined to achieve a specific objective but are often not tasked to do the exact job for which they were trained. In the case of the replacement organization for the Dutch contingent, Combined Team Uruzgan (CTU), available resources and capabilities were limited. Each contributing nation in Afghanistan had staked a claim for specific regions and allocated its stretched national resources to achieve stability in those areas. The Spanish and Italians were committed in western Afghanistan, headquartered in the city of Herat. The Americans, British, and Canadians were engaged with entrenched Taliban forces in southern Afghanistan, fighting in the vicinity of Kandahar, Ghazni, Zabul, and Helmand Provinces. The Germans and Scandinavians were fighting a resurgent enemy near the cities of Mazar-e Sharif and Kunduz in northern Afghanistan. The United States was focused on eliminating

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[3] Simon Rogers and Lisa Evans, "Afghanistan Troop Numbers Data: How Many Does Each Country Send to the NATO Mission There?," *Guardian*, 22 June 2011.

[4] Author's notes, ISAF Joint Command Book 8, 30 November 2009.

[5] Nicholas Kulish, "Dutch Government Collapses over Its Stance on Troops in Afghanistan," *New York Times*, 20 February 2010; and Robbert Gabriëlse, "A 3D Approach to Security and Development," *Connections* 6, no. 2 (Summer 2007): 67, http://dx.doi.org/10.11610/Connections.06.2.02.

Taliban incursions across the Afghanistan-Pakistan border in eastern Afghanistan out of the large airbase at Bagram.[6] There were no forces readily available outside of the 1,500 soldiers of the Australian Mentoring Task Force (MTF) already in Uruzgan. The Australian force was insufficient to assume the entire Uruzgan area of operations but could serve as a backbone for a larger force.[7]

Formation of Combined Team Uruzgan

Using the Australian MTF as a foundation, CTU was conceived with the capabilities defined in the new ISAF operations order, Omid, which emphasized counterinsurgency operations.[8] The focus was on helping the government of Afghanistan earn the respect of its people in the provinces of Uruzgan and Daykundi by providing a better option than the Taliban for local governance. There were several aspects involved in improving governance. First, a more reliable and trusted police force would be built through close Coalition partnership, more effective training of police officers and leaders, and better equipment and living conditions. Second, more effective government and ministry leaders at the provincial and district levels would be selected. Third, ANA forces would integrate with local police forces to attain a more unified and formidable force arrayed against insurgent fighters. Fourth, police and army forces that the people could rely on to protect them effectively, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, without corruption, would be developed. Fifth, the Coalition would assist the Afghan government in providing for basic services in support of its constituents. Specific developmental priorities included improved education, expanded road and air transportation networks, health care extension into rural areas, enhanced rule of law execution and infrastructure, water resource management, agricultural efficiency, and power generation. The requirements needed to achieve the governance, development, and security objectives laid out in Operation Omid helped establish the capability requirements necessary to augment the Australian forces already in Uruzgan.[9]

Given these capability requirements, all contributing nations were solicited to provide forces needed to fill the gaps. Countries approached the solicitation with their own national mandates and caveats as driving factors for consideration. What matured out of the initial outreach was a series of commitments from nine different countries that would allow CTU to achieve its goals and objectives.[10] The Australians provided an MTF that could mentor the ANA but not the Afghan police. The Australians also expanded their PRT in Uruzgan and provided the leadership, financing, and national support to make it effective. The PRT was augmented by U.S. security and support elements as well as Swedish and Norwegian police training teams. Eighty percent of the CTU staff were Australian and New Zealand officers; U.S. Army officers made up the remaining 20 percent. These professionals were pulled together to create a cohesive brigade command, control, and planning element.[11] The Singaporeans stepped in to provide unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), close-in countermortar radar, and intelligence analysis teams that were not allowed to deploy outside of CTU's base, Camp Holland, but were highly trained in their specific tasks. The French provided an infantry company that worked as a subordinate unit to a U.S. Army cavalry squadron. The Australians provided a base support battalion, which was augmented by U.S. logistics, airfield management, and contracting elements as well as Slovakian guards and Singaporean indirect fire-detection radar and UAVs (which could also not deploy outside Camp Holland). In addition to the Army cavalry squadron, the United States provided support staff, Army Corps of Engineer elements, and various other supporting elements as required.

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[6] "What Are Regional Commands (RC) in Afghanistan?," Army Mom Strong, 26 March 2010.

[7] Author's notes, ISAF Joint Command Book 8, 28 December 2009.

[8] Col Mathew C. Brand, USAF, *General McChrystal's Strategic Assessment: Evaluating the Operating Environment in Afghanistan in the Summer of 2009*, Air Force Research Institute Research Paper 2011-1 (Maxwell AFB, AL: Air University Press, 2011).

[9] Dale, *War in Afghanistan*, 34–35. Dale's description of Operation Omid captures the intentions of ISAF and IJC. She possesses a unique perspective as she participated in many of the planning and strategy discussions that led to the crafting of Operation Omid. She writes, "Operation *Omid* (hope) is the joint, combined, and civil-military operational-level operation designed to implement the campaign plan across Afghanistan over time. Its main points of emphasis draw on the major themes of GEN McChrystal's 2009 *Initial Assessment*, which were later captured in the 2009 revision of the ISAF campaign plan: geographical prioritization across the theater, based on population centers, commerce centers, and trade routes; and full integration of security, governance, and development efforts in those prioritized locations. Its most important contribution, according to IJC Commander LTG Rodriguez, was to 'focus and synchronize efforts'."

Identifying the requirements and capabilities needed to achieve CTU's specified and implied tasks was just the beginning. Once the appropriate forces had been identified, CTU had to be balanced in terms of national caveats and limitations associated with employment in a combat situation. Violating the conditions of national commitment was tantamount to losing that capability. Exploring the limits of those conditions was essential to understanding the maximum level of employment for each element. Once complete understanding was achieved, those forces must be employed accordingly. The soldiers in those units were respected for the capability they could contribute and not chastised for failing to do what was prohibited by their own national leadership. Extensive negotiation, compromise, and detailed coordination were necessary to flush out the detailed planning necessary to mold an effective Coalition combat brigade.

With the national contributions aligned to the capabilities, the last critical element to the overall design of CTU was the selection of its commander. The initial inclination was for the Australians to provide a commander for the combined NATO brigade but, based on national priorities and sensitivities, they agreed to provide the preponderance of forces but not the commander. Many other countries were approached with similar results. After several weeks of discussions with many national commanders, it was determined that a U.S. Army colonel would command CTU with primarily Australian staff.[12]

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[10] See appendix B.
[11] CTU staff roster, author's library, August 2010–June 2011.

"Great Plan—Why Don't You Stay and Execute It?"

At 0800 on 28 April 2010, the author was in the gym going through his daily routine on the elliptical machine while watching the Los Angeles Lakers beat the Oklahoma City Thunder on TV. His elation at the Lakers' Game 5 victory in the first round of the National Basketball Association (NBA) playoffs was disrupted by a 6-foot-4 paratrooper asking, "What are you doing?" It was Lieutenant General Rodriguez, with whom the author had spent hundreds of hours since August 2009 and had developed a trusted relationship. The author responded simply that he was working out and watching the Lakers advance in the playoffs. Rodriguez's response was given with a wry smile: "No, really—what are you doing?" The author replied, "Boss, you know exactly what I am doing. You signed my retirement paperwork and I retire in five days." Rodriguez said, "Right. But I want you to stay in Afghanistan for another year and take command of Combined Team Uruzgan."[13] After some thought, the author scrambled to get aboard a Lockheed C-130 Hercules transport aircraft that had been secured to fly the IJC planning team to Uruzgan to confirm Dutch approval of the CTU establishment plan prior to getting the final go-ahead from General McChrystal. The author was not scheduled to fly to Uruzgan, but at 0900 he lifted off from Kabul en route to Tarin Kowt, the provincial capital of Uruzgan.

Landing in Uruzgan, the IJC planning team made its way from the airfield and walked past the Dutch hospital and through the barracks area to the headquarters. The author spent an entire day reviewing the CTU plan with the Dutch and Australian leadership and staff. No one knew that he had been asked to be the "American commander" identified in the plan. During a day full of briefs and discussions, it became clear to the author that he needed to stay. The Dutch leadership approved the CTU plan, but his biggest obstacle remained.

It took two days to return to Kabul via a very convoluted route. When the author got back, he told General Rodriguez that he was interested in staying in Afghanistan to command CTU but that he had to talk to his real boss, who expected him home as a retired colonel in two days. When he finally talked to his wife, a retired U.S. Army lieutenant colonel, her response was classic:

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[12] Author's notes, books 8–11, November 2009–May 2010. The author was responsible for soliciting contributions and commitments for CTU, to include identifying a nation to assume command.

[13] Author's notes, book 1, 26 April 2010. LtGen Rodriguez approached the author in the gym in the Kabul International Airport to ask him to take command. The relationship and trust that the author had earned after working closely with Rodriguez for a year led to this request. The description of how the author decided to accept command is based on his recollection of the events and the notes that he took during subsequent briefings. The quotes provided are the author's recollection of the encounter with his commander.

> I understand that you would be staying in Afghanistan for another year to command a brigade, so you really have only two options. First, you could come home and retire as planned, in which case I have to live with you for the rest of our lives knowing that you turned down a brigade command in combat. Second, you could stay and take command, in which case you can do something that you have always dreamed of doing. So, you really do not have a choice, do you? I will see you in a year![14]

Leadership Lessons Learned

Know Yourself

After 27 years of service, the author knew who he was as a soldier and what his values were. He had served in combat in the Gulf War (1990–91) and deployed elements of his commands to fight in Kosovo, Iraq, and Afghanistan. He had served as the operations officer for Joint Task Force Bravo, responsible for all U.S. operations in Central America, and deployed to South Korea and Germany on multiple tours. He had relinquished command of 3d Battalion, 320th Field Artillery Regiment, 101st Airborne Division, in June 2000, just prior to the onset of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF). When he assumed command of the 10th Mountain Division Artillery in 2003, his brigade-size unit was cross-attached to other brigades, and he assumed duty as the division chief of staff at Fort Drum, New York, while the rest of the division deployed to Afghanistan and Iraq. The author had supported OEF and OIF as a commander, but he had not deployed. He knew that from a personal and professional perspective, he needed to deploy to Afghanistan. He was lacking in firsthand knowledge of the fight but had the experience and capability to help CTU efforts in Afghanistan. He could learn the details and nuances of the area of operations quickly and provide value regardless of where he served. Knowing his strengths and weaknesses, his tendencies, his motivations, and his intentions drove him to seek a tour in Afghanistan and capitalize on the opportunities that presented themselves there.

Seek Responsibility and Take Charge

When the author arrived in Afghanistan as a senior advisor to General McChrystal, his lack of firsthand experience in the country set him back. He did not possess the necessary in-depth knowledge of the culture, terrain, tribal and government systems, and military situation on the ground to be an integral member of the ISAF inner circle. The author was subsequently given the opportunity to work with Lieutenant General Rodriguez to establish and stand up the brand-new IJC. He seized

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[14] LtCol Tamasine Wood-Creighton, USA (Ret), conversation with author, 1 May 2010.

Figure 7. Change of command, 1 August 2010

Left to right: BGen Kees van der Heuvel, Col Creighton, and Mr. Bernard Philip.
Source: courtesy of the author.

on this opportunity and quickly integrated into the team of seven colonels and field-grade officers tasked with creating an organization designed to command and control all military operations inside Afghanistan.

In this capacity, the author was tasked with assisting with coordination for the 2009 Afghan presidential election at the military command center in Kabul.[15] This did not prove to be the glamorous job that was expected, but it was executed with passion. The author learned how the ANA worked and built a reputation for getting things done while filling in the gaps in his knowledge that had originally existed. This job led to many others as the chief of planning for IJC. The author embraced every plan and enjoyed the chance to contribute to the overall effort. By seeking responsibility and taking charge of assigned and implied tasks, the author developed his Afghan knowledge while building a solid reputation.

Embrace Opportunity

Recognizing his weaknesses allowed the author to focus energy, study, and activity on filling the gaps in his knowledge regarding the situation in Afghanistan. Taking advantage of all tasks and executing them to the maximum ability helped him create a trusted environment between peers, subordinates, and bosses. This trust centered around facing and overcoming difficult challenges as a team. Building and sustaining a reputation as a team builder and team player who gets things done on time helps create opportunity. Teamwork is especially important in a coalition environment in which different internal U.S. organizational cultures are closely intertwined with other nations' cultures, expectations, and ways of doing business. Putting forth maximum effort with a positive attitude, regardless of the task or the obstacles, helped reinforce this reputation. Opportunities are created by establishing a reputation as someone who can form teams to accomplish any mission.

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[15] *Security and Stability in Afghanistan: Report to Congress in Accordance with the 2008 National Defense Authorization Act* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 2009), 8.

Recognizing when an opportunity is presenting itself is sometimes simply as easy as a three-star general asking you to stay on another year to command. Sometimes, though, it is far subtler. When given the chance to execute a task, regardless of how small or insignificant it may seem, embrace it. See the task as an opportunity to build your knowledge base, to achieve the satisfaction and pride of doing things well to help the team, and to build your own reputation as a team player. Know yourself well enough to know when to seize an opportunity to make a difference and improve both yourself and your team.

CHAPTER 5

Arrival in Uruzgan

The Importance of Preparation and First Impressions

After arriving in Uruzgan Province in central Afghanistan, the author made his first battlefield tour on 25 July 2010 as the incoming commander of Combined Team Uruzgan (CTU).[1] The author's Dutch counterpart, Royal Netherlands Army brigadier general Kees van den Heuvel, recommended that they visit several of the forward outposts as part of their handover and changeover plan. The two officers flew out to meet with the team at Forward Operating Base (FOB) Wali, located approximately 25 kilometers to the east of CTU headquarters at Camp Holland in the provincial capital of Tarin Kowt. There, the author quickly realized the extent of Taliban control of the Mirabad Valley. As reported to him at FOB Wali during the preceding week, three Afghan National Army (ANA) soldiers had been killed in ambushes while crossing the same river footbridge at the same time on three successive days.[2] The Australian mentors were extremely frustrated that despite their continued efforts to teach the ANA soldiers to vary times, routes, and routines when traveling, the learning curve was exceptionally slow. On the flight back to Camp Holland, the Coalition team received an emergency call from a combined Afghan and Australian patrol that had been attacked by Taliban forces about three kilometers west of the patrol base on the northern edge of the lush green valley floor. The CTU helicopter crew quickly identified the enemy positions and engaged them with machine gun fire until the insurgents had withdrawn.[3] The situation in the Mirabad Valley was volatile; as in other areas throughout the province, commerce, trade, and normal day-to-day living by Afghan standards was practically impossible. Changing that would require significant effort.

The Task at Hand

After taking command of CTU, the author's task was to build and lead a cohesive international team that worked with the government of Afghanistan to provide a safe and stable environment in Uruzgan. The challenges associated with building an effective Coalition team stemmed from the chasms that existed in cultural norms, national caveats, organizational objectives, and operational imperatives.[4] Units arrived in Afghanistan with specific national guidance, goals, objectives, and rules that were not necessarily aligned with the overall Coalition guidance. Civilian organizations possess their own priorities and ways of doing business, and as they did not work directly for the Coalition, they made sure to maintain their staunch independence. Based on International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) guidance, CTU was to enable the Afghan government to lead governance, development, and security activities, but it often lacked the organizational skills and resources required to do so.[5] Cajoling this vast cast of characters into an effective operational organization while also engaging with the enemy provided very clear lessons. Leading this conglomeration of well-intentioned and motivated organizations required the following:

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[1] Author's notes, book 2, 25 July 2010.

[2] Author's notes, book 2, 1 July 2010. This report shaped the author's perceptions of the security situation in the Mirabad Valley. It also provided insight into the challenges associated with partnering with Afghan forces who did not always heed advice given or training provided.

[3] Author's notes, book 2, 1 July 2010.

- A clear and simple vision in developing a plan that all stakeholders could support;
- Cultural knowledge and understanding in learning how to integrate all capabilities toward a common goal while satisfying national and organizational imperatives;
- Consensus building skills while working with diverse organizations to agree on common goals; and
- Compromise in knowing when to direct and when to negotiate, as well as understanding how to reach an acceptable decision for all sides.

Building the Plan Helps Build Teamwork

As a first step, CTU leadership crafted the CTU operations order (Operation Morcal), which incorporated the strengths of all contributing nations while integrating efforts around improving governance, development, and security.[6] This plan was created by working closely with both Coalition and Afghan leaders in a positive environment to jointly resolve issues and create feasible plans of action. With Coalition assistance, the Afghan government leadership developed and implemented plans toward improving the well-being of Afghan citizens in Uruzgan. CTU worked with these leaders to ensure that the Afghan and Coalition plans were synchronized and complimentary. Governance efforts focused on shuras (meetings of tribal elders), during which the provincial governor listened to district chiefs and local elders. With support from Afghan ministerial directors and Coalition backing, leaders were able to help resolve critical issues. The author recalls that these discussions could last for hours in stifling heat, with temperatures exceeding 100 degrees Fahrenheit.[7] During these meetings, Afghan leaders often voiced concerns about Taliban influence, water-sharing agreements, ancient land disputes, and the need for improvements in education and health care. Coalition leaders received these points and pledged to do everything possible to help the provincial governor make improvements, taking care not to promise anything that could not be delivered. The governor was able to deliver on many of their promises. For example, the governor worked with the Coalition Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) to improve access to clean water, access to education, agricultural expertise, medical care, and more.[8] By working together with Afghan partners to understand the issues, explore potential solutions, and resolve problems, CTU coalesced around the missions it faced. The cooperative attitude generated by Coalition and Afghan partners working together toward a common goal helped communication and progress toward mission accomplishment.

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[4] Stephen M. Saideman and David P. Auerswald, "Comparing Caveats: Understanding the Sources of National Restrictions upon NATO's Mission in Afghanistan," *International Studies Quarterly* 56, no. 1 (March 2012), 67–84.
[5] *Tactical Directive* (Kabul: Headquarters, International Security Assistance Force, 2009).
[6] "Commander CTU Briefing," author's library, June 2011. This briefing describes the critical components of the CTU operation order issued for June–December 2011. CTU modified the order periodically to validate operational alignment and to quickly integrate new units and staff officers into the team.

Expanding the Afghan Government's Positive Influence

The elimination of the Taliban's presence in Uruzgan required the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) and CTU to achieve a heightened level of governance and enhanced development. This task was spearheaded by Australian Special Forces Task Force 66, which partnered with local security forces to eliminate local Taliban leaders.[9] The special operation forces (SOF) in Uruzgan were successful in coordinating with both U.S. and Australian national intelligence sources to target Taliban formations and leadership. Once the major Taliban forces were removed, the ANA was able to establish new bases and expand its security forces into the valleys that connected the districts. The Afghan police subsequently expanded their presence into the more populated areas around Tarin Kowt and district centers. The combination of intensified government interaction and engagement, reliable and effective development progress, and expanded security led to a more trusting relationship between the local people and their government, improved economic conditions, and the development of a more positive outlook in a more secure environment.

Effective leadership in a coalition environment was the driving force that led to these improvements. Building relationships between diverse civilian and military organizations to develop a concerted effort dedicated toward common goals and objectives required understanding of cultural nuances, political objects, and operational strengths and limitations. The author met frequently with the leaders of these organizations, which helped establish trusting relationships. In discussions, all parties looked for areas of common interest and tried to listen intently to other viewpoints while seeking acceptable courses of action. Integrating the capabilities of both host-nation and Coalition entities enabled the maximum impact of governance, development, and security actions. With greater security, improved governmental performance, and increased services, the people in Uruzgan were compelled to assist the government of Afghanistan to push out the Taliban and establish a more peaceful and prosperous environment. One challenge to note is that it was very difficult to capitalize on progress and prevent backsliding into a chaotic environment.

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[7] Author's notes, August 2010–June 2011. There are numerous examples of shuras conducted at the provincial, district, and village level. Weather Spark indicates that the average high temperature in Uruzgan in July is 90 degrees Fahrenheit. "Climate and Average Weather Year Round in Uruzgan," Weather Spark, accessed 11 November 2022.

[8] *Comprehensive Needs Assessment for Uruzgan, Afghanistan: Final Report* (Canberra: Australian Agency for International Development, 2010).

[9] Austin Long et al., *Building Special Operations Partnerships in Afghanistan and Beyond: Challenges and Best Practices from Afghanistan, Iraq, and Colombia* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 2015), 28, https://doi.org/10.7249/RR713.

Leadership Lessons Learned

First Impressions Are Lasting

As the commander of a multinational brigade, the author recognized that he could only make a first impression once with the many new people and organizations in his sphere. First impressions are a two-way street, with each party forming their initial views. Preconceived notions and reputations impact first impressions. Before meeting with new people and organizations, one should do their homework regarding what they have done, how they operate, and how they are organized. At CTU, this research helped shape which meetings were scheduled and in what priority, as well as frame initial discussions and questions that would garner the most relevant responses. Some of the author's first impressions of individuals and organizations were directly influenced by their reputation and information gathered prior to meeting. What follows are specific events that helped form an overall impression of the situation in Uruzgan.

Defining Spheres of Influence

Determining who the critical actors were that influenced CTU's success or failure helped establish priorities and battle rhythm. The CTU staff, in coordination with the PRT and other partners, clarified who should be met with, by whom, and how often. This information was reflected in the calendars of the appropriate leaders. A system was developed to provide and distribute timely feedback from these meetings.[10]

Rethinking Discipline at Camp Holland

As the author walked the half-kilometer from the airfield through the cantonment area to CTU headquarters at Camp Holland on his initial reconnaissance visit in May 2010, he noticed that there were recreation areas located to the sides of the 50-soldier single-story billets. Behind the green canvas screening, he could see off-duty soldiers hanging out, sunbathing, and playing games. It seemed to the author that there was a relaxed sense of urgency and that, at least at Camp Holland, the focus of most soldiers was on simply getting through the next day rather than achieving a common mission. The bathrooms on base were coed, which the author sensed would take some getting used to for newly arriving Americans and Australians. The soldiers at Camp Holland operated on 8-hour shifts, which meant that they were off-duty for 16 hours at a time. This seemed excessive.[11] Australian Army warrant officer class 1 David Galloway's perspective at the time was that:

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[10] Capt Margaret Nichols, ADF, interview with the author, 18 October 2010.

> Each nation has its own views on different things. The Dutch have a different view, Australia has a different view, and America has a similar view to Australia. Nothing really is overtly an issue. Things just tick along, things go ahead, and nothing has come up that has been an issue.[12]

The key lesson that the author drew from these encounters were that quick action was needed to change the sense of urgency at Camp Holland. Standard shift hours were changed immediately from 8-hour to 12-hour days.[13] This directive met with some resistance, but with some explanation and polite persistence the soldiers of CTU quickly adapted. Assessing the situation, making a timely decision, and holding firm on enforcement of that decision helped solidify the author's authority, earn him respect, and mold CTU to his vision.

The Australian Relationship with Dutch Leadership

During the author's confirmation trip to Camp Holland in April 2010, he met with senior Australian and Dutch military leaders. Through these conversations and observations of the interaction during briefings and meetings, the author formed the impression that their relationship was not as integrated as he thought would be effective. According to the first deputy commander of CTU and senior Australian Army officer in Uruzgan, Colonel Jason Blain:

> Mid-2010 was a period of significant change for ISAF operations in Uruzgan Province. After more than four years of service and sacrifice by members of the Netherlands Armed Forces, the Dutch combat mission in Uruzgan was ending and ISAF leadership of the province was being handed over from the Dutch to the United States. On [1 August 2010], Task Force Uruzgan became

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[11] Author's notes, book 2, 4 July 2010.
[12] WO1 David Galloway, ADF, interview with author, 4 October 2011.
[13] WO1 David Galloway, ADF, interview with author, 4 October 2011.

> [CTU], and the ISAF security and reconstruction work started by the Dutch and Australians in 2006 would continue through the combined efforts of the U.S., Australian, Singaporean, and Slovak personnel remaining in the province.
>
> The increased energy and pace brought to the mission in Uruzgan after 1 August 2010 was immediate and profound. Having served with the Dutch when commanding the Australian Mentoring Task Force [MTF] in the province and then becoming the inaugural deputy commander of CTU, the author witnessed firsthand how CTU went about expanding the admirable work done by its Dutch predecessors. Key to the CTU approach was a high-tempo, and at times dangerous, face-to-face engagement strategy with key actors and leaders in the province. Time was invested in learning and navigating the complex political and tribal landscape of the province and provided a laser-like focus on developing the capability of the [ANSF], especially the Afghan National Police [ANP].[14]

The author learned that the Dutch and Australians had operated independently. They coordinated when they had to, but only on a minimal level. The Australians on the Dutch staff were relegated to junior staff positions, while the Australian MTF operated independently with the ANA, regardless of what the rest of the command was doing. There was little sense of an integrated, focused effort.[15] This reality was at the forefront of the author's thought process as CTU plans were created and developed. From his perspective, the Dutch were focused on governance and development while the Australians were focused on mentoring and building a capable ANA. The author sought to unify these efforts to achieve a greater impact regarding governance, development, and security.

The Dutch Relationship with Uruzgan

The Dutch relationship with the Afghan government leaders and ministries at the provincial level was highly advanced.[16] Their focus on development and governance was seen in the quality and frequency of engagement. Their relationship with the ANA, however, was only through the Australian MTF and apparently unconnected to their core governance and development mission. Their relationship with the ANP, the Afghan National Directorate of Security, tribal elders, and other local and cultural leaders was largely ignored. The author's impression was that progress was to be made in Uruzgan only by integrating all aspects of provincial leadership.

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[14] MajGen Jason Blain, ADF, interview with author, 20 March 2022.

[15] MajGen Jason Blain, ADF, interview with author, 20 March 2022.

[16] Joanna Impey, "Dutch Leave Afghanistan," Deutsche Welle, 1 August 2010.

Change of Command Speech

The author chose to deliver his change of command speech in the Dari language.[17] He wrote the speech in English, had it translated to Dari and written out in phonetics, and then practiced dozens of times to make sure it was received accurately. The feedback he received from many Afghan and Coalition representatives was that this gave the impression of seriousness, a desire to cooperate with Afghan partners, and a level of cultural sensitivity. The speech was recognizable as elementary Dari, but it made a lasting positive impression. For weeks after the change of command, tribal elders and other leaders in the community would approach the author and strike up a conversation in full-speed Dari; a lasting impression had been made.

Welcome Meeting at the Provincial Reconstruction Team Compound

Just after the author assumed command of CTU, the PRT hosted a reception for him and the new PRT director, Bernard Philip. All the Afghan tribal elders, provincial and district leaders, and government ministers were present. The author used this opportunity to talk to each of them in a relaxed environment. Putting faces to names, listening to their most pressing needs, noticing their body language, recognizing that some did not come (such as ANP colonel Matiullah Khan, though he lived across the street from the base), and assessing personalities was extremely helpful in determining priorities and focus of effort. The author was able to confirm written and verbal assessments and consider who to engage with in more detail. Initial impressions regarding who to trust and who to watch out for were also helpful.

Helicopter Reconnaissance to Forward Operating Base Wali

From the author’s perspective, the key lesson learned from his adventurous trip to FOB Wali in July 2010 was that there was no time to waste and that plans that could be executed quickly should be made immediately. His first impressions were that the Australian mentors were frustrated by their Afghan partners’ lack of advancement, which was allowing an active Taliban presence in Uruzgan. The author had to instill a sense of urgency to the planning process at CTU headquarters and support implementation in the field. This also confirmed the need to integrate governance, development, and security activities to make a lasting difference.

Combat Sense of Urgency

During the author’s first week in command of CTU, he was in his office coordinating with his personal staff when suddenly the lights went out. It was as though the generators had been hit, sabotaged, or destroyed. As it was pitch black in the office, the author and his staff stepped out into the covered hallway that connected the dozen or so Conex (metal shipping box) offices of the headquarters. As they were standing there trying to figure out what had happened, a young Dutch private came sauntering by the office. One of the staff officers asked the private what he was doing at headquarters, to which he replied simply that he had just shut down all the generators to do routine maintenance for the next few hours. The author was not involved in the initial discussion but overheard the entire exchange. His response was quite heated. He could not understand how anyone could leave the entire command without power, without coordination, and without a contingency. In retrospect, if he had it to do over again, the author probably would not have come down on the private so hard, as he was just doing his job according to the way he was taught. The author did, however, make a lasting impression on his staff and others as to the importance of maintaining operational readiness at all times.[18]

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[17] Author’s notes, book 3, 4 July 2010. The author rehearsed with interpreters for several hours the night before the change of command ceremony.

Tempering Actions toward the Local Population

On the return trip from the author's first meeting at the provincial governor's compound with deputy governor Khodi Rahim, his party took a direct route through the busiest section of Tarin Kowt. The locals were all at the market, so the streets and sidewalks were full. The author was seated in the rear hatch of an Australian 4-wheeled Bushmaster Protected Mobility Vehicle that was driving in the middle of the convoy. As the convoy moved through town, many of the children approached with smiles on their faces, miming for pen and paper. To maintain security, the Bushmaster drivers had been trained to be cautious of people getting too close to the convoy. If locals came too close and did not respond to hand and arm signals, soldiers had been trained to fire a small pen flare near them to warn them away. If the flare failed, they were authorized to use increasingly deadly force to protect the convoy from ambush. This training made all the sense in the world in a more dangerous environment, but these actions were in violation of ISAF orders to be more accepting of the civilian population in Afghanistan. ISAF had directed Coalition soldiers to accept more risk before escalating the use of force. This order made sense based on the number of civilians who had been injured or killed because Coalition forces had been too quick to assume the worst and increase the use of force. As a leader, balancing the use of force was difficult because it put soldiers at increased risk with no visible benefit to the immediate mission. A soldier in the trail Bushmaster in this convoy, feeling threatened by the women and children approaching too close to his vehicle, fired a pen flare into the crowd and hit an Afghan woman.[19] Her burka quickly caught fire and burned her. The CTU team was able to treat the woman and make amends, but the impression left on the author was that CTU soldiers were caught in a very tough tactical position. They would have to work hard to improve the trust and relationships that had deteriorated during years of conflict. The author reinforced ISAF policy and stressed the importance of tempered actions while engaging closely with the Afghan population.[20] CTU was ultimately able to improve its relationship with the local citizenry by enforcing this policy, which took consistent communication and reinforcement.

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[18] This vignette describes a soldier who was simply doing their job as they were trained without understanding the impact on the rest of the command.

First Forward Operating Base Meeting as Commander

After assuming command of CTU, the author made a point of quickly visiting every FOB to meet the soldiers and leaders under his command, build a unity of purpose, and assess standards and missions, living conditions, opportunities, and risks. He did not yet know any of his soldiers or subordinate leaders, as they had all been forward deployed during the transition and change of command. Most of the soldiers were Australian and did not completely understand the command structure that had been designed. They were at their post doing their duty to the best of their ability. A new brigade commander was interesting to them but not compelling. While talking with Australian soldiers who had just arrived in Uruzgan after completing their mission readiness exercise (MRE), CTU's command sergeant major, Warrant Officer David Galloway, told them that they "have to be able to look for those opportunities to expand and build things . . . in a short period of time."[21] Galloway, a senior Australian leader, was instrumental in building a trusted relationship between the CTU command team and the Australian soldiers at the many FOBs in Uruzgan.

During the author's visit to FOB Musazai, his assessment was that the unit there was focused on day-to-day operation within the base but not on engaging local leaders and building rapport with people in the Mirabad Valley. The troops were well led, fed, and cared for, but they seemed to be biding their time rather than working to help improve security and subsequent governance and development in the valley. This made complete sense from an Australian perspective, as they were tasked by their government to train the ANA, not conduct counterinsurgency operations. The author's vision was different from what they were used to.

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[19] Author's notes, book 3, 15 August 2010.

[20] Gerry Gilmore, "McChrystal: Conventional Strategy Won't Win in Afghanistan," U.S. Central Command, 7 September 2009.

[21] Capt Margaret Nichols, ADF, interview with WO1 David Galloway, ADF, 30 October 2010.

Figure 8. Afghan girl harvesting poppy tar

Source: courtesy of the author.

He coached them to train the ANA to build security and enhance trust in government in their area of responsibility, which was completely within their remit.[22]

During the author's out-brief that followed several hours spent at FOB Musazai, the reaction from the soldiers was one of disinterest. Not all of the soldiers were available or in attendance. Body language was one of indifference. No questions were posed. The soldiers seemed distracted as the author talked to them. Warrant Officer Galloway had the same impression.[23] He engaged the Australian leadership from his perspective, which helped instill a unified command structure and reinforce the Coalition leadership construct. The author knew that he had work to do to earn the respect of a multinational force. During future visits, the author and his staff worked to modify the CTU approach to instill a unity of purpose and command that had to be earned.

The author and his staff worked toward full integration of leadership from many perspectives. The author engaged commanders in their areas of responsibility on a daily basis. CTU leadership rotated visits to more than 30 outposts on a monthly basis based on the situation and priorities.[24] The primary posts were at Deh Rawood and Chora, which were collocated with the 1st and 2d Kandaks (battalions), respectively, of the ANA's 205th "Hero" Corps. Outside these posts were smaller outposts located in Shahid-e Hassas, the Baluchi Valley, the Mirabad Valley, and Gizab. CTU's command sergeant major, Warrant Officer Galloway, and his successor, Warrant Officer Class 1 David Ashley, focused on personal contact and discussion with all troops while the author focused on getting to know the leaders down to the platoon level. Bad news was delivered in person whenever possible. For example, Galloway describes breaking the news to the Royal Netherlands Air Force's Boeing AH-64 Apache attack helicopter unit about an extension of their stay in Uruzgan as follows:

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[22] Nichols, interview with WO1 David Galloway, ADF, 30 October 2010.

[23] Nichols, interview with WO1 David Galloway, ADF, 30 October 2010.

[24] The author's calendar depicts battle circulation visits to multiple bases weekly, including Hadrian, Musazai, Wali, Mirwais, Tinsley, and Mashal.

> That was an opportunity to go down to speak to the Apache team that had been extended for a month because they were having concerns about the fact that they had just had a tour extended at short notice. We went down there and put them all at ease and explained the situation in the way the commander normally does and convinced them that they were doing the right thing and everything was fine and everyone appreciated their efforts and they were all happy and smiling and we all had near beers for as long as we could.[25]

Building trusted relationships at all levels demanded forethought, planning, and discipline. The results became evident only after several months of constant engagement and reinforcement. Seeing the results of these efforts in successful battles with the enemy and improved standards of living were tangible indicators that the CTU approach was working. When the author visited schools throughout Uruzgan and Daykundi, the hope and delight that he saw in the eyes of the children who were excited to be learning reinforced CTU's vision.[26]

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[25] Nichols, interview with WO1 David Galloway, ADF, 13 October 2010.
[26] Nichols, interview with the author, 7 April 2011.

CHAPTER 6

Taking Command

Establish a Unifying Vision

On 28 June 2010, the author walked into an air-conditioned Conex box at International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) Regional Command South (RC South) headquarters in Kandahar, Afghanistan, to begin the planning process for the writing of the Combined Team Uruzgan (CTU) operations order. The weather outside was about 110 degrees Fahrenheit, while in the Conex box it was a milder 90 degrees. Sitting around a table were about 20 soldiers from the U.S. Army's 2d Armored Cavalry Regiment who had been assigned to the author as his U.S. staff and an Australian Army captain, Andrew Welch, a 6-foot, 3-inch former world champion in heavyweight mixed martial arts, who would serve as adjutant.[1] This was the first time that the CTU commander and staff had met, let alone worked together.

The staff's positive attitudes, teamwork, and cooperation was demonstrated from the start and set the tone for the next 12 months. Each staff member was motivated to demonstrate their competence and expertise. They listened attentively, took initiative, and worked tirelessly to write an order that was unique in many ways. The command would integrate multinational forces at and below the platoon level to achieve its mission while also meeting individual national expectations within given constraints. The author used his meetings in The Hague, Netherlands, on 22–25 June to help shape his understanding of the situation in Uruzgan Province.[2] The staff quickly identified shortfalls in the organizational construct and presented viable solutions that were acceptable to both CTU's higher headquarters, RC South, and national supporting commands. The staff coordinated effectively with senior and subordinate leaders alike, which contributed to building relationships up and down the chain of command as well as consensus on the concepts and tasks described in the order. Writing an operations order in an established command from a single nation requires training and repetition.[3] The order written by the multinational CTU staff was completed in a short period of time, and it built unity of command by providing the staff, subordinate commands, and higher headquarters opportunities to provide input, express concerns, and build trust in the brigade and with each other.

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[1] CTU staff roster, August 2010. Australian staff officers were in Tarin Kowt for this initial planning effort that took place in Kandahar.

[2] Author's notes, book 1, 23–25 June 2010. The Dutch government asked the author to come to The Hague to meet with the Ministry of Defense, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Dutch Consortium for Uruzgan, and other officials to help transition the province from Dutch to NATO control.

[3] Author's notes, books 1 and 2, 27 April–29 July 2010. The author conducted meetings with RC South staff and subordinate commanders during the last week of June and first two weeks of July 2010. He met with adjacent brigade commanders, staff officers, and medical, engineering, logistics, and aviation unit commanders. The author also met with RC South civilian advisors, Afghan leaders, and other experts who helped him gain an in-depth understanding of Uruzgan from an RC South perspective.

Coordination with Subordinate Commanders, Higher Headquarters, and Supporting Commands

Unity of command goes two ways. CTU had to become part of the RC South team, which was initially commanded by a British Army officer, Major General Sir Nicholas P. Carter, and subsequently by a U.S. Army officer, Major General James L. Terry.[4] As a new command with a new mission and no organic association, one of CTU's main objectives in becoming part of the RC South team was to make sure that both adjacent infantry brigades and all supporting elements understood its mission, goals, and objectives. This was accomplished by going to each subordinate and adjacent unit's headquarters to coordinate on ground activities, support requirements, and boundary issues. This included visiting Camp Leatherneck, the U.S. Marine Corps base in Helmand Province, to coordinate with the Marines who were located to the southwest of CTU's area of operations around Kajaki Lake.

Meeting with adjacent and supporting units is advocated in U.S. military doctrinal guidance, but the importance of this coordination was amplified by the unique structure of CTU and the increased national caveats that were associated with the large number of contributing nations. Most importantly, the many logistics, aviation, engineering, and contracting organizations as well as civilian representatives that would be needed to support CTU began to understand the additional requirements associated with supporting a multinational organization. Without these coordinating meetings, CTU would not have succeeded, for these essential requirements would not have been met. The gaps in CTU's organizational structure were filled by the exceptional capabilities and insights supplied by the supporting commands. In most cases, supporting commanders would analyze the CTU operations order and provide even more support than was requested based on their own independent assessments.

Multinational Teams

The CTU team was composed of many units, including maneuver, logistics, airfield support, intelligence, and contracting. These units ranged from six-soldier augmentation teams to formations of more than 1,500 soldiers. For example, the Australians provided approximately 1,500 soldiers and civilians to staff a Mentoring Task Force (MTF), a Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT), a base support battalion at Multinational Base Tarin Kowt, an Australian Federal Police unit, and a wide range of civilian contracting teams.[5] The New Zealanders provided a six-person team to augment the CTU staff in critical positions, including the Joint operations officer, Major William P. Keelan, and the Joint intelligence officer, Major John R. Harvey.[6] The French and Slovaks each provided infantry companies, the former being deployed to Deh Rawood while the latter provided base support.[7] Each contributing nation provided units with unique capabilities that had to be molded into a coherent team. Bringing these disparate formations together required intense personal leadership. Concerns regarding cultural stereotypes and expectations were addressed and resolved quickly. A clear understanding of missions and tasks had to be consistent with national caveats, expectations, and limitations.

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[4] Author's notes, book 2, 5 July 2010. The author met with MajGen Carter on 5 July 2010 for his initial in-briefing.

Organizational lines of communication required confirmation and reassurance regarding which aspects of command and control fell under national lines and which fell under North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) brigade lines. There were instances in which subordinate commanders were asked to do things by their national command authority without the prior knowledge or approval of the CTU commander. There were also instances in which commanders were asked to do things by the CTU commander that were not consistent with their national directives. For example, the author asked the Australian component of CTU to partner with both the Afghan National Army (ANA) and Afghan National Police (ANP) while pushing the influence of the Afghan government further into rural areas in Uruzgan, but the Australian mission in Afghanistan was strictly to mentor the ANA. To resolve this dilemma, CTU attached a U.S. Army infantry platoon to the Australian MTF to work with the ANP. The CTU command established a rule that Australian mentors would coach Afghan soldiers to expand their footprint and then mentor them as they conducted operations. The command also worked with the PRT to coordinate closely with the MTF to provide governance and development capabilities throughout their areas of operations.

These misunderstandings were largely resolved as a result of the trust that existed between commanders both laterally and vertically. The author worked closely with numerous Australian Army officers, including Lieutenant General Mark Evans; Major General John P. Cantwell, the senior Australian Army commander in Afghanistan; and Lieutenant Colonels Mark Jennings and Darren Huxley, the MTF commanders, to figure out how to craft CTU so that it satisfied all of the applicable standards.[8] The fact that the units within CTU were often task-organized down to and below the platoon level multiplied the necessity for constant communication and coordination. By defining the operational construct and reinforcing strong lines of communication, the challenges associated with building a cohesive multinational team within the brigade soon cleared up.

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[5] David Watt, "Australian Defence Force in Afghanistan," Parliament of Australia, accessed 11 November 2022.
[6] CTU staff roster, August 2010.
[7] "ISAF Uruzgan," Ministry of Defence and Armed Forces of the Czech Republic, accessed 11 November 2022; and "Slovakia Mission in Uruzgan Ends," DVIDS, 24 June 2013.
[8] Author's notes, book 2, 20 July 2010, and book 3, 1 August 2010.

Mission Development: Secure Regional Command South's Northern Flank

RC South looked to CTU to protect its northern flank from Taliban aggression. The CTU staff, ably led by its chief of staff, U.S. Army lieutenant colonel William Stewart, determined that the primary mission of CTU was to create a stable environment in Uruzgan for Afghan-led governance, development, and security to take hold.[9] To do this, CTU had to expand on the Dutch achievement of establishing security in the province's major population areas while also coordinating for the expansion of governance and development into newly controlled towns and villages. The chief challenge associated with the planning for this expansion was that many of the units needed to achieve its success were not under the operational control of CTU. Two special operations units, U.S. Special Forces Task Force 34 and Australian Special Forces Task Force 66, were under the operational control of the ISAF Joint Command (IJC) Special Operations Headquarters.[10] The PRT was an Australian national asset under civilian control, collocated but not technically under the operational control of CTU. An aviation battalion of the U.S. Army's 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) was critical to the expansion of security in the battlespace but was in general support of RC South and not directly under the control of CTU. Mission development and planning for the implementation of CTU's vision was complicated by the lack of direct control of the forces necessary to achieve the required tasks. As CTU was a Coalition unit with no organic units, understanding the resources required and matching them to the necessary organizations was only half the problem—coordinating support from various units was critical to achieving the overall objectives.[11]

The most important task identified in the mission statement was to integrate governance, development, and security activities throughout Uruzgan, beginning at the provincial level in the capital of Tarin Kowt and followed by the district and village levels. The U.S. commanders could use all assets in their areas of operations to integrate security activities with governance and development initiatives. The Australian MTF, conversely, was restricted to mentoring the ANA. It could not mentor Afghan police or hold terrain, and it did not have the mandate or resources to support development or governance initiatives. To account for these realities, the CTU planners used their imaginations to design a plan in which other units with governance development and police mentorship responsibilities would be collocated with an ANA *kandak* (battalion) in Chora. As the center of gravity for Afghan support in Chora, the Afghan kandak would be responsible for security there, which included conducting governance and development activities. The MTF was responsible for mentoring the Afghan kandak and, as such, would support these governance and development efforts. Understanding the dynamics of unit capabilities and restrictions allowed planners to integrate the skill sets necessary to accomplish assigned missions while adhering to baseline agreements at the national level. Coordinating the CTF plan face to face with leaders of each of these units ensured complete understanding and helped build bonds, which allowed for smooth resolution of misunderstandings during the execution phase.

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[9] Author's notes, book 2, 19 July 2010; and author's map, 14 December 2010.

[10] "Special Operations Joint Task Force–Afghanistan," Afghan War News, accessed 11 November 2022.

[11] Author's notes, book 2, 4 July 2010.

Expanding Afghan Government Control

The Dutch had created a secure environment in Uruzgan for governance and development in the provincial capital of Tarin Kowt and the district centers. However, the Taliban and other insurgent forces still controlled the lines of communication between the district centers and the smaller towns and villages that dotted the valleys of the province.[12] CTU's mission was to enlarge the zone of security to enable governance and development to expand throughout the province. Unfortunately, the conventional forces assigned to CTU were not adequate to clear the routes between major communication hubs. To accomplish this task, CTU coordinated with IJC special forces operating in and around Tarin Kowt. These special forces were under the command of IJC Special Operations Command but were required to gain approval from the CTU commander before taking any action in the CTU area of operations. The agreement between the author and the commander of IJC special forces, U.S. Army brigadier general Austin S. Miller, was that the latter's units in Uruzgan were to design and coordinate their plans so that they were synchronized with CTU planning in both time and space and that they supported CTU's vision and objectives.[13]

CTU worked with the special forces to facilitate mutually supportive operations. The special forces were directly involved in CTU mission development and prioritized their missions based on CTU priorities. At a staff level, the CTU operations officer worked closely with both U.S. and Australian special forces liaison officers to synchronize operations in time and space. Consequently, U.S. Special

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[12] *The Dutch Engagement in Uruzgan, 2006–2010: A TLO Socio-Political Assessment* (Kabul: Liaison Office, 2010), 40.

[13] Author's notes, travel book, 6 November 2010.

Forces Task Force 34 cleared the roads to the districts of Gizab and Shahid-e Hassas between August and October 2010.[14] Australian Special Forces Task Force 66 likewise targeted Taliban and other insurgents in the Mirabad Valley and along Route Bear, the 120-kilometer main route between Tarin Kowt and Kandahar. These operations enabled the ANA and partnered MTFs to clear major routes in Uruzgan and allow for government influence to take hold. The ability of CTU to work closely with special operations forces not under its direct command offered an example of how all available resources were considered and used to accomplish CTU's overall mission.

Continuous Coordination and Cooperation

CTU's mission was not developed in a Coalition vacuum. On the contrary, both its mission and operations order were developed in close coordination with its Afghan partners. The provincial governor of Uruzgan, the commander of the 4th Brigade of the ANA's 205th "Hero" Corps, the National Directorate for Security, and the provincial chief of police were all involved in the development process. Partnered Coalition advisors helped ANA and provincial police units develop complementary plans needed to expand security throughout the province. The concept used to create these plans had the ANA leading the effort to expand security outward from Tarin Kowt. Once an area was secured, provincial police units would enter to establish a continuous government presence. The provincial governor, in close cooperation with the PRT, developed a comprehensive plan to promote education, health, and essential services in the secured areas. The detailed coordination of the orders generated by the major agencies in the province led to expanded government trust, increased trade, and improved living conditions in secured areas.

Integrating national contributions was the only way to build a force that could accomplish the tasks assigned to CTU in Uruzgan.[15] The mosaic created by the matching of unit capabilities with specified and implied tasks was tied together by a complete understanding of an individual unit's skill set, its employment parameters, and its relationships with other units. Two organizations in particular illustrate how units with specified employment requirements were integrated in the CTU team. The government of Slovakia offered a highly trained infantry company to guard Camp Holland, the interior "keep" compound at Multinational Base Tarin Kowt.[16] The Slovak soldiers were not allowed to leave the base under any circumstance. Rather than bemoan the inability to augment maneuver units partnering with ANA and police units in the districts of Uruzgan, CTU treated the Slovak employment requirements as an effective way to accomplish an essential task. With this essential task accounted for, other organizations were freed up to perform tasks outside the gate. This decision enabled the Slovak soldiers to fulfill an important mission while operating within their national requirements.

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[14] Author's notes, book 4, 22 September 2010.
[15] Author's notes, ISAF Joint Command book, 27 March 2010.
[16] "The Slovak Republic," North Atlantic Treaty Organization, accessed 11 November 2022.

The Singaporeans provided exceptional intelligence, reconnaissance, and counterbattery radar capabilities. These skills necessitated that those units fall under different subordinate commands within the CTU structure. A six-soldier intelligence team provided a world-class deep analysis capability needed by the CTU intelligence staff to analyze villages and towns associated with the expansion of Afghan government control into the rural areas of Uruzgan.[17] The Singaporean unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) element contributed directly to CTU's ability to focus sensors in support of subordinate unit operations. Responsibility for this element fell to the brigade's support squadron, while the tasking authority flowed directly through the intelligence staff element based on command priorities. The counterbattery radar was directly associated with base defense and was assigned to the base support squadron for tasking and operational control. In determining how best to employ the national capabilities provided, some were retained under brigade control while others were assigned to subordinate units based on operational design rather than national contribution. Splitting the national lines of control while maintaining unity of command necessitated early dialogue in the planning phase and continuous communication and feedback during the execution phase of CTU's mission. The commander of the Singaporean UAV element recalled the following:

> At [CTU headquarters], the command team's emphasis on teamwork and operational safety was truly commendable considering the harsh and trying operating conditions. Having been personally involved in several of these safety meetings and working discussions, I am grateful for the command's emphasis on teamwork and safety, which provided us with the necessary support from CTU to navigate the initial operating challenges and establish robust standardized operating procedures that enabled us to operate safely alongside other nations' air assets. The command was most sensitive to the needs and challenges of each nation under CTU's command, and that had engendered trust and closeness at the working level and helped fuse everyone in CTU into one effective operational force.[18]

Despite the numerous national contributions to CTU, there existed several gaping holes in the brigade's design. Most notably, the brigade's logistics capabilities were far below the requirements necessary for the effective conduct of operations. CTU had no organic logistics elements. The Dutch force design included hundreds of soldiers who performed numerous maintenance, support, food service, and other service tasks. When CTU arrived in Afghanistan, personnel to perform these logistics and support tasks were nonexistent. During the author's visits to the RC South logistics brigade at Kandahar and U.S. Forces–Army headquarters in Kabul in early July 2010, he explained where CTU needed additional support.[19] He was thoroughly impressed by the willingness of both headquarters to ensure that CTU's quality of life and logistics support requirements were fully met. The logistics brigade from RC South sent a full-up team commanded by an excellent officer with enough logistics operators and equipment to adequately support CTU. U.S. Forces–Army recognized the shortfalls in CTU's organic capability and sent an entire contracting team to coordinate for civilian capability to replace what the Dutch had accomplished with military personnel. Building trusted relationships with higher and adjacent headquarters quickly proved essential to achieving operational effectiveness.

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[17] Sgt Jessi McCormick, USA, "Singapore Concludes Valued Mission in Uruzgan," DVIDS, 22 June 2013.
[18] Maj Augustine Tan, SAF, interview with author, 8 April 2022.

Higher-level contributing nation support elements also had to be consulted. CTU was given the leeway to use national contributions based on specific parameters, but without close cooperation with higher national command elements, misperceptions could lead to implementation friction. To ensure that national command elements agreed with the way in which their provided forces were used by CTU, courtesy calls and visits were executed.[20] These engagements, although not technically required, were essential to maintaining smooth operations. Without early discussions with national command elements, those elements could have caused disruption during an operation or even pulled their forces from the operation. On several occasions, the relationships built while coordinating the implementation of national contributions helped quickly resolve questions that arose as a part of day-to-day operations.

Taking Command

On 1 August 2010, the author officially assumed command from Royal Netherlands Army brigadier general Kees van den Heuvel during a change-of-command ceremony at Camp Holland.[21] This change of command represented a shift in focus and vision. The author was determined to capitalize on the gains made by the Dutch forces operating in Uruzgan. He wanted to engage more broadly with Afghan leadership, improve security between major population centers, and convince Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) that they needed to get off their bases and into the more rural areas of the province. By working more closely with the Afghans to build trust, the author's aim was to enhance their capacity and bring them closer to creating and maintaining a self-motivated and implemented security environment.[22]

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[19] Raspal Khosa, "Australia's Commitment in Afghanistan: Moving to a More Comprehensive Approach," Australian Strategic Policy Institute, 31 August 2010.
[20] Author's notes, book 1, 20 July 2010.
[21] Khosa, "Australia's Commitment in Afghanistan."

To achieve these goals, the author used the change-of-command ceremony as a focal point. Prior to assuming command, he talked to all local leaders, tribal elders, nongovernmental organizations, United Nations representatives, and others who were working in Uruzgan. By talking to a wide variety of people who shared essentially the same objectives, the author was able to let them know that he was there to support them but that they all had to work together in terms of methods, timing, and priorities.[23] His discussions with the ANSF, including the warlord Matiullah Khan, led to the establishment of a trusted relationship with wide-open lines of communication.[24] Setting an early tone for open and honest communication enabled all parties to begin working together quickly, which greatly contributed to the success of combat operations just weeks after the author assumed command.

In addition to this, the author had prepared, translated, and delivered his change of command speech in the Dari language. This made a significant impression on his Afghan partners, many of whom even a year later thought that he could actually speak their language. From a command perspective, the author believed that the CTU forces under his command began to understand how closely he wanted them to partner at all levels. The author's vision had thereby been delivered face to face, in speeches, during the planning process, and through personal engagement. Sustaining the vision and delivering results was the next step.

To carry the momentum achieved prior to and during the change-of-command ceremony, the author focused on continuing to engage Afghan leaders as well as his own command. The purpose of these initial visits was to reinforce the CTU vision by setting and maintaining high standards of conduct and adherence to the mission. Hundreds of discussions helped identify challenges, clarify intentions, and answer questions so that all understood and supported the direction in which CTU was going. Not every soldier liked the concept or vision at first, but they accepted changes and got on with the mission.[25] Possessing a confident and assertive attitude without arrogance or disregard for cultural sensitivities was vitally important. Achieving a balance between competing requirements to be both assertive and humble is the art of leadership, which can continue to improve over time. Generally, people will forgive some transgressions if they know one's heart is in the right place.

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[22] Author's notes, book 1, 25 June 2010.
[23] Author's notes, book 1, 25 June 2010.
[24] Author's notes, books 2 and 3, 1 July–14 September 2010.
[25] Capt Margaret Nichols, ADF, interview with the author, 30 October 2010.

This Is Afghanistan—Everything Is Hard

There were numerous challenges to the implementation of these plans. After having spent hundreds of hours with both ANP brigadier general Juma Gul Hemat and ANA brigadier general Mohammed Zafar Khan, the author concluded that they mistrusted each other.[26] This mistrust led to friction regarding the timing of specific operations. Corruption and ineptitude within various Afghan government departments made expansion of government services throughout Uruzgan difficult. According to a report by the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR), various ministry leaders misappropriated funds, failed to hold subordinates accountable, and demonstrated a lack of ability or skill to implement action plans. The PRT and other CTU leaders worked closely with all agencies to help coach Afghan agents to appropriate action with some degree of success in all areas. The challenge remained to build the capacity within the Afghan leadership to sustain security, good governance, and development in Uruzgan without Coalition prompting and support.

Leadership Lessons Learned

Vision: Keep It Simple and Repeat It Often

From his initial meeting with British Army major general Sir Nicholas P. Carter, the commander of RC South, the author determined that CTU's primary task was to secure RC South's northern flank by creating a stable Afghan government and building trust and basic services in Uruzgan.[27] His goal was to make this vision simple and easy to understand and repeat at all levels. By keeping the vision simple, people understood it and bought into the concept. If a leader can work out operational details and tasks by establishing a clear and concise mission and intent, their subordinates will be able to act with more autonomy, many language translation issues will be avoided, the leader will be able to delegate more effectively, and progress will be synchronized across many organizations within and in support of the command. Keeping the vision simple is even more important in an environment in which one's staff and subordinate commands change over frequently. In one year, CTU had three different Australian MTFs and two different U.S. Army maneuver battalions. The CTU staff changed over three times, and in some cases there were as many as five different officers filling any one position.[28] With such constant turnover, a simple message that is repeated frequently is vital to success.

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[26] Author's calendar, 2010-11. The author met with both commanders several times per week at security meetings, shuras, and other engagements. During these meetings, the author was able to analyze the personal dynamic between them.
[27] Author's notes, book 2, 5 July 2010.

Close Cooperation and Coordination

Close coordination and cooperation both within CTU and with other adjacent and higher-level support organizations was vital to mission success. Forming a cohesive organization with units from nine different countries requires genuine communication with subordinate commanders, national element leaders, and other involved organizations. The development of a clear and concise mission statement and a succinct commander's intent with appropriate supporting tasks allowed CTU and PRT leaders and staff members to effectively coordinate for support commitments that were vital to achieving assigned and implied objectives. CTU did not have the assets available to achieve its tasks without support from other organizations. Demonstrating that CTU's mission supported the missions of other organizations helped solidify the support needed.

Coalition Planning Essentials

Establishing a common vision during the planning process sets the conditions for overall success. Forming and assuming command of a single-nation organization in peacetime takes years of training, education, and experience. Doing so with a multinational organization in a combat environment presents complex obstacles that can lead to ineffective performance in the face of a determined enemy if not appropriately addressed. Intense cooperation and understanding, combined with a good balance between patience and a drive toward a common mission, can help overcome these obstacles.

Accounting for national priorities and understanding the nuances of how each nation views their contribution contributes directly to reducing potential friction points while in the design phase of planning. In the case of CTU, constant communication with unit leaders as well as engagement with their higher national headquarters helped avoid any misunderstandings and build the trust needed to work through the inevitable challenges.

Developing a cohesive organization that is focused on common goals in support of a unified mission enables subordinate units to accept their roles in the overall plan and maximize their individual contributions. In the case of CTU, units embraced their roles over time and accepted full responsibility for the command's unifying vision and mission accomplishment.

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[28] Nichols, interview with the author, 7 October 2010; and Nichols, interview with the author, 11 May 2011. The Australian battle rotation was on a seven-month cycle. When the author took command of CTU in August 2010, his initial Australian staff was already on the ground and began rotating back to Australia in September. The second Australian staff began rotating in September and departed by April 2011. The final staff arrived in March–April and remained until after the author relinquished command of CTU in June 2011. During the author's tour, he had five planning officers, as two were replaced due to family and medical issues.

Establishing specific expectations and roles within a multinational organization and ensuring that they are communicated and understood given multiple languages and doctrines presents the need for more face-to-face communication and brief backs than would be normal in a standard single-nation organization. Building unit cohesion and esprit are essential to any command. In a multinational coalition, diverse nationalities and cultural expectations must be molded into a unified organization that respects differences but requires accountability and high standards of performance. In the case of CTU, continuous communication with genuine concern and understanding helped build an organization that was much greater than any of its individual contributors.

From the perspective of retired U.S. Army colonel Gregory C. Scrivens, who served as CTU operations officer, coordination processes within the staff had to be closely coordinated in a multinational organization that experienced constant staff rotation:

> Once I became [CTU] operations officer . . . I had a meeting with what I assumed was all of my staff, to include the chief of operations and the lead planner. I assumed that the Australian staff worked the same as the American staff, [but] they were a little different. After a few heated discussions with the lead planner, he informed me [that] he did not in fact work for me but worked with me. He was a separate staff element. It was an eye-opening meeting, for as [an operations officer] I was used to having the planner work for me, [but] now it was different. In the end, learning about the organization and determining the best way to communicate ended in a very solid compatible working relationship with the lead planner. We became very effective, I learned a lot from him, and we remain close friends to this day. [The] bottom line up front: Don't assume all is the same when you meet with a different nation's organization . . . take time to learn how they are set up, the task organization down to the staff level, and who direct[ly] reports to who . . . don't assume it's how your organic organization is set up.[29]

Unity of Command

Fighting in a coalition environment can be an exceptional combat multiplier, but only if the disparate units work together. For example, the close cooperation between the Allies of World War II that was created by strategic understanding

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[29] Col Gregory C. Scrivins, USA (Ret), interview with author, 12 April 2022.

Figure 9. Kiwi dinner for a multinational team

Source: courtesy of the author.

between U.S. president Franklin D. Roosevelt, United Kingdom prime minister Winston S. Churchill, and Soviet Union premier Joseph Stalin put unrelenting pressure on Nazi Germany and led to ultimate victory.[30] Further, divergent operations aimed at achieving separate objectives can cause more harm than good. During World War II, Italian prime minister Benito Mussolini sought to create an Italian empire in North Africa without coordinating with his ally, German chancellor Adolf Hitler. Mussolini's venture stalled in Egypt, which compelled Hitler to send German forces to North Africa, thereby reducing his ability to focus effort on Operation Barbarossa, the Axis invasion of the Soviet Union. Hitler's ally hurt his overall strategy by not coordinating efforts.[31]

Taking command of a coalition unit requires building a team whose members trust each other. Understanding national goals, objectives, limitations, and strengths helps in the design of the formation, as the abilities of each unit can be maximized. Developing and implementing an operational plan through close coordination and communication helps encourage open discussion and collaboration, which contributes to a common understanding of the mission and a cohesive organization. Exhibiting positive leadership while maintaining consistent support to all formations, regardless of nationality, is a critical element to building a cohesive unit. A leader cannot show favoritism. In the case of CTU, the author was careful to treat his combined U.S., Australian, New Zealand, and Singaporean staff as one team. Listening closely to each officer and soliciting advice from the staff based on their competence and position rather than their nationality helped the author avoid leaning on the U.S. officers on the staff. Ultimately, taking command of and building a cohesive coalition unit is an art developed from years of experience in using every opportunity in planning, rehearsals, and execution.

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[30] "Wartime Conferences 1941–1945," Office of the Historian, U.S. Department of State, accessed 11 November 2022.

[31] "The Struggle for North Africa, 1940–1943," National Army Museum (United Kingdom). Approximately 250,000 German and Italian troops surrendered to the Allies in this theater on 12 May 1943. The German and Italian soldiers committed to North Africa were not available to fight other battles in Europe.

CHAPTER 7

Relationships in Diverse Cultures

Build a Team of Teams

Planning for the Afghan parliamentary elections in September 2010 necessitated the building of a close relationship between Combined Team Uruzgan (CTU) and the Independent Election Commission (IEC) representative. The IEC representative was a very energetic man with high integrity who had the courage to engage with local leaders and election officials at all of the 79 polling stations in Uruzgan Province.[1] He planned and coordinated for security at each polling station by working with local police, Afghan National Army (ANA) forces, and Coalition forces. Working with the Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT), the IEC representative established well-provisioned and -staffed polling stations in remote areas of Uruzgan. In spite of threats of violence against him, he moved around throughout the province on his own with minimal security as he talked to leaders and supervised election rehearsals. The author's relationship with the IEC representative developed during a series of meetings and inspections in the weeks leading up to the election. The IEC representative helped the CTU leadership team think through the challenges anticipated during the coming election based on lessons learned from the 2009 Afghan presidential elections.[2] The Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) highlighted several lessons learned from those 2009 elections, which included identifying polling stations, controlling printed ballots, enabling candidate agents and election observers, protecting ballot chain of custody, facilitating a faster pace for voting, tallying votes faster and more transparently, making results forms tamper-resistant, tabulating votes, lodging complaints, and improving coordination among involved parties.[3] These lessons were applied to the 2010 elections in Uruzgan and Daykundi.

The IEC representative was an Afghan citizen who possessed a completely different cultural perspective. CTU had to learn to communicate effectively by understanding different perspectives. The trust that grew between the two parties during the planning and rehearsals for the parliamentary elections helped them overcome several challenges during the elections themselves. During the elections, remote polling stations were ordered opened in Kaz Uruzgan District and Daykundi Province, both of which had challenges associated with "green-on-blue" attacks (insider attacks committed by Afghan soldiers against Coalition forces), civil disturbances, and threats of Taliban violence against voters and election officials.[4] The close relationship between the author and the IEC representative enabled them to overcome all these obstacles. The author trusted the IEC representative to execute the elections fairly and to request support when necessary. In turn, the IEC representative trusted CTU to provide a secure environment without interfering with the election process. When threats against the IEC representative grew imminent, he knew that he could rely on CTU for security and safety. This relationship was a critical element to the success of the elections in Uruzgan in 2010.

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[1] Author's notes, book 4, 18 September 2010.

[2] John Brummet, *Lessons Learned in Preparing and Conducting Elections in Afghanistan* (Washington, DC: Office of the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, 2010). The lessons identified in this report reflect the lessons learned by the author while working at the ANA operational command center in Kabul in August and September 2009.

[3] Brummet, *Lessons Learned in Preparing and Conducting Elections in Afghanistan*, 4.

Building and maintaining solid relationships is at the core of successful leadership in a coalition environment. The establishment of strong relationships lead to cohesive teams working together to accomplish missions. Each relationship has its own boundaries. Through interaction with the people and organizations in one's area of operations, a leader begins to learn who they can trust and who is less trustworthy. The leader develops an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of individual team members and of other organizations. Knowing who to rely on for specific missions gives the leader a sense for how to delegate. Based on these relationships, the leader knows who can act independently and who requires additional supervision or more frequent feedback mechanisms. As a new commander with minimal historic relationships in his area of operations, the author made the building of new trusted relationships one of his highest priorities. Understanding the cultural, tribal, and national nuances associated with the different organizations and individuals in Uruzgan helped quickly solidify these relationships.

The author studied the organizations that would most greatly impact the success of CTU and sought out the leaders of and important people within those organizations who would be vital to the accomplishment of CTU's mission. Some of these people and organizations were at echelons above CTU, to include the U.S. combatant commands, International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) Regional Command South (RC South), international militaries, foreign offices, the United Nations, governmental organizations, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). These higher-level organizations, which included the author's own higher headquarters as well as others that were separate from the CTU chain of command, all influenced CTU's operations in Uruzgan. There were also lateral organizations that fought in adjacent battle spaces or provided services and support at the same level as CTU. Some of the most important relationships that the author fostered during his time in Uruzgan were between himself and his staff and subordinate commanders. He also worked closely with Afghan tribal and government leaders, the PRT, and other organizations that were operating in the provincial capital of Tarin Kowt but did not work directly for CTU.

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[4] Capt Margaret Nichols, ADF, interview with the author, 18 September 2010.

These are just some of the many groups with whom the author worked to build trusted relationships. Each of these relationships were unique, based on the personality of the people involved, the nature of the organizational relationship, the chemistry shared with the individuals, and the unique circumstances that were dealt with on a daily basis. In all cases, understanding the nature of the relationship, deciding who to trust with what task or information, and opening lines of communication required significant time and effort, but this paid off exponentially as CTU executed its mission. Understanding the roles and responsibilities of different organizations and the specific relationships fostered within them helps a great deal in comprehending lessons learned in one's area of operations.

Higher Headquarters and Organizations

RC South was CTU's immediate higher headquarters. The author had met the commander, British Army major general Sir Nicholas P. Carter, several times in 2009 as the latter coordinated with the ISAF and ISAF Joint Command (IJC) staffs prior to assuming command of RC South. Carter was succeeded by U.S. Army major general James L. Terry of the 10th Mountain Division, in which the author had previously served as division artillery commander at the brigade level.[5] The author's relationship with both RC South commanders was positive and supportive. They expected CTU to secure their northern flank in a supporting role, which would enable them to focus their energy on the main fight in and around the city of Kandahar. The commanders provided the author with the essential assets that CTU needed, while the author was able to relieve them of any worries about threats from the north with little interference.

The author's relationship with both of his commanders was supported by critical relationships with their deputies. The author had known Major General Carter's operations deputy, U.S. Army brigadier general Frederick B. Hodges, since they were lieutenants in Germany in the early 1980s, and they had recently served alongside one another as battalion commanders in the 3d Brigade of the U.S. Army's 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault). The two officers had developed a close personal and professional relationship during the previous decades, and they frequently met for cigars at midnight in Kandahar. The author had met Major General Terry's support deputy, U.S. Army brigadier general Kenneth R. Dahl, in 1978 when they were freshmen at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. The two officers knew each other well, as their career paths had brought them together many times during the last 30 years.

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[5] "10th Mountain Division Takes Command of Regional Command South during Transfer of Authority," DVIDS, 2 November 2010.

These two friends in critical positions provided the author with trusted contacts in CTU's higher headquarters. Brigader General Dahl remembers:

> Jim Creighton and I were West Point classmates and close friends with prior service experience together, which enabled swift understanding and rapid mutual support. I considered our personal and professional relationship a major force multiplier. Force multiplier is the term [that] the military uses to describe something that causes a dramatic impact on effectiveness without an increase in resources. In Afghanistan, one of our scarcest resources was time, as we seemed to constantly face a deadline to accomplish the mission. Under these circumstances, the preexisting relationships one had with others was a major force multiplier. Common experiences of training, education, and friendship build unwavering trust, and that is like adding rocket fuel to the decision-making process. Such was the case between Regional Command South and Combined Team Uruzgan.[6]

The author had informal access to RC South's headquarters. The question was how to use that access while maintaining trusted relationships and not abusing friendships. He was ultimately able to gain a better understanding of the RC South commander's intent and candid operational feedback on an informal basis. If the author had critical operational requirements or faced obstacles in securing support, the RC South headquarters would be able to help guide him to the appropriate agencies and understand how best to achieve CTU's objectives. Brigadier Generals Hodges and Dahl were instrumental to CTU's success. CTU may have been successful without these relationships, but from the author's perspective, the unit benefited greatly through these associations.

U.S. Forces–Afghanistan and ISAF Joint Command

On 6 October 2008, the U.S. Department of Defense announced the activation of U.S. Forces–Afghanistan (USFOR-A). According to the Institute for the Study of War, USFOR-A "was established to serve as a 'functioning command and control headquarters for U.S. forces operating in Afghanistan' that operate independently of ISAF."[7]

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[6] LtGen Kenneth R. Dahl, USA (Ret), interview with the author, 13 April 2022.

[7] "International Security Forces (ISAF)," Institute for the Study of War, accessed 11 November 2022.

The author's relationship with USFOR-A was rooted in a 10-year friendship with its commander, U.S. Army major general Timothy P. McHale. The two officers had served together in the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), where McHale served as the aviation brigade commander and the author as the commander of 3d Battalion, 320th Field Artillery Regiment. At Fort Campbell, Kentucky, they had conducted numerous air assault missions together and knew each other well. This hit home when CTU was moving one of its M777 lightweight 155-millimeter howitzers from Tarin Kowt to Firebase Musazai.[8] McHale was checking on USFOR-A support to Tarin Kowt the same day that CTU had scheduled to improve its indirect fire coverage on its eastern flank. The author and McHale were standing together at the landing zone (LZ) when they heard the unique sound of a Boeing CH-47 Chinook medium-lift transport helicopter approaching with a 155-millimeter howitzer slung to its belly. As the pilot approached the LZ, the dust of Uruzgan billowed up, creating a brownout condition. The pilot was completely blinded and was forced to back away. After the dust cleared, the pilot approached on a steeper angle and hit the target on the second attempt. The sling was released just as the howitzer touched the ground. The helicopter took off to the west, leaving dead silence at the patrol base as the haze settled. The author and McHale observed each other covered in brown dust, the only visible features on their faces being two huge white toothy grins. They had done this many times before over the years.

Major General McHale was keen to help CTU as much as he could. He was instrumental in upgrading the brigade's infrastructure, providing an airbase control element for CTU's 7,300-foot airfield and excellent base support activities that had previously been performed by the Dutch.[9] Reaching out to McHale for support had its risks. On the one hand, the author was violating his chain of command by going around RC South; on the other hand, with CTU serving as a supporting effort, he was taking care of his area of operations without burdening the primary effort in Kandahar. As RC South knew what he was doing and did not interfere, the author continued to work directly with USFOR-A to maintain quality base support. His sense was that RC South was just as happy to know that CTU was well cared for without their assistance.

Prior to assuming command of CTU, the author had served as the chief of plans at IJC. In that role, he spent many hours with U.S. Army lieutenant general David M. Rodriguez, the IJC commander, first in establishing the command and then developing plans to expand, deploy, and fight in Afghanistan in support of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) counterinsurgency operations. On 31

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[8] Nichols, interview with the author, 14 May 2011.

[9] "C-17 Landing at Tarin Kowt," Multinational Base Tarin Kot report, 2 April 2011.

December 2009, Rodriguez asked the author to review the plans for the coming year with the IJC staff. The primary staff met in a conference room at 2200 and began their review of current operations and future plans. The meeting proceeded with lively discussion back and forth for the next two hours. At midnight, the officers around the room hinted that it was in fact a new year. There was an acknowledgement, a toast with water, and congratulations around the room for about five minutes. The staff then proceeded for the next hour or so to finish the briefing. Both U.S. and non-U.S. officers were confused about the purpose of the meeting, which did not necessarily have to take place on New Year's Eve. At the end of the day, they all laughed and chalked it up to team building—which is exactly what it was.

After hundreds of similar meetings and discussions, the author's relationship with Lieutenant General Rodriguez and his staff was solidified. The author knew the general's plans, intentions, vision, and tendencies. Rodriguez had trained the author and then selected him for command at a critical point in the operation. Thanks to his experience at IJC, the author was able to build the CTU vision and plan with direct knowledge of IJC's priorities, goals, and objectives. In talking to CTU's higher headquarters, RC South, and coordinating for resources, he knew how to synchronize his requirements with the IJC commander's intent, which helped him succeed in negotiations. The author never had to mention his relationship with IJC or even refer to it. The people he worked with closely understood his arguments and logic and recognized that they were directly in line with the Coalition's strategic objectives in Afghanistan.

Leadership Lessons Learned

Long-Term Relationships Are Built during Years of Service

During his time as commander of CTU, the author worked to keep close relationships private. Public knowledge of these relationships would not have been helpful from a team-building perspective. Building a network of trusted friends and partners helps build the foundations of operational success. Networking is not about sharing a business card at a party. Networks are built over years of hard work and sweat. Working together to accomplish difficult missions and overcome obstacles as a team establishes networks of trusted relationships that can transcend organizational lines and build an environment in which people genuinely care about each other.

International Representatives

CTU was supported by contingents from nine different countries. Developing relationships with those contingents, as well as their national leadership, helped CTU capitalize on a wide array of resources and support. The Australian ambassador to Afghanistan, Paul Foley, was one of CTU's most effective advocates. The author first met the ambassador in Kabul while he was coordinating the plan for the Dutch departure from Afghanistan. Ambassador Foley was keen to see Australia's main effort in Uruzgan continue in a positive direction. As such, he and the author worked closely to craft the CTU operations order that would capitalize on Australia's strengths as a major contributor in Uruzgan.[10] The two men continued to work closely together after the author assumed command of CTU. The ambassador's frequent presence in Tarin Kowt enabled this relationship to grow, and the author took the time to meet with him frequently. Their discussions were completely open and wide ranging. Ambassador Foley provided the author with exceptional feedback regarding Australia's concerns as well as potential opportunities for CTU to work more closely with the Australian government. The author coordinated to take the ambassador to all major project sites and introduce him to Afghan leaders throughout Uruzgan. The ambassador became an integral member of the author's team and the greatest advocate for CTU in both the Australian capital of Canberra and Kabul.

By working with the Australian PRT director, Bernard Philip, CTU leadership was able to secure for the brigade exceptional support from Australia. From the author's perspective, the close relationship that he and Philip cultivated with Ambassador Foley helped build a trusted relationship with Australian governmental leadership. The ambassador possessed firsthand knowledge of CTU's operations and could provide both analytic and anecdotal input in support of CTU's requests and concerns. The author worked to create similar relationships with senior representatives from other contributing nations as well.[11] As a result, CTU was able to amass more than $266 million (USD) for development projects in rural Uruzgan that otherwise may have been left undone.[12]

Make Time to Cultivate Critical Relationships

Even if a leader is exhausted at the end of the day, they should clear their calendar to allow people to engage with them. A leader must prioritize these discussions into their daily calendar and talk to people at every opportunity.

Be Open, Genuine, and Honest in These Relationships

The more a leader lets people into their trusted circle, the more these people will respond positively to the leader's operations. Nevertheless, there is a risk that others will misuse this trust. From the author's perspective, this risk should be mitigated by building trust and keeping an eye out for abuse of that trust. The author personally tends to err on the side of trust until it is violated. This approach builds larger, stronger networks that outweigh the risk of negative impacts.

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[10] Author's notes, book 2, 19 July 2010.

[11] Nichols, interview with the author, 24 September 2010.

[12] CTU Development Report, June 2011.

The Provincial Reconstruction Team

The PRT's mission in Uruzgan was to improve governance and development throughout the province. The core of the organization was Australian, with augmentation from the Netherlands, the U.S. Department of State, the U.S. Agency for International Development, a U.S. Navy security force and other contributing nations. A diversity of opinions, priorities, and visions created a situation that required immense patience and cultural understanding. The PRT and CTU leadership teams met on a weekly basis officially but interacted daily.[13] Discussions were always lively as they debated priorities, methodologies, and potential courses of action. The two sides rarely agreed at the outset. Conversations centered around how to best improve development and governance across the board in Uruzgan, but the methodology and courses of action that would be used to achieve this were often at odds. In all cases, the two sides came to agreement in the middle, usually after lengthy discussions. From the author's perspective, the solutions that were ultimately agreed to were always better than either of the initial positions. Although the PRT and CTU leadership teams were oftentimes on opposite sides of arguments, the two sides developed strong, lasting bonds based on their ability to work through issues and derive solutions that improved the situation for the Afghan people living in Uruzgan.

Relationships with Afghan Leadership

The Corrupt Police Chief

Afghan National Police (ANP) brigadier general Juma Gul Hemat exemplifies the difficulty in building relationships with host nation leadership. Hemat wore a long five-o'clock-shadow beard and had a personality that dominated any room he entered. A native of Uruzgan, he had been the provincial chief of police for many years and had earned his share of enemies by using force to convince people to see things his way. The author saw him almost every day and was always greeted by a kiss delivered with the scratch of his beard on both cheeks. The author sat next to Hemat at a Christmas dinner hosted by Brigadier General Aziz Zakaria of the Afghan National Directorate of Security (NDS). The dinner was held on the rooftop of the NDS headquarters on a beautiful chilly day, shielded from the wind by a three-foot wall around the roof. The author and Hemat sat with 20 other provincial leaders around a carpet as many turkeys, meat platters, rice, and tea were positioned before them. The author began feasting and glanced over to Hemat, who had pulled a large turkey from the middle of the carpet to within reach of his big hands. He gave the author a sideways glance and a big grin as he started digging in. Within a few minutes, what had been an entire turkey was now a carcass picked clean. Hemat's gregarious nature served to camouflage his less-than-savory activities.

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[13] Author's calendar, July 2010–November 2010.

General Hemat maintained control of his district police chiefs through intimidation and control of their paychecks, which he delivered in cash. The CTU leadership was convinced that he inflated his *tashkiel* (list of authorized personnel) and gas usage but could not validate the discrepancy. They were suspicious that the Afghan Ministry of Interior Affairs paid him for people who did not exist and gas he did not use, the implication being that he kept the difference. There were accusations of mistreatment of both civilians and subordinates, but nothing could be proven. When he was pressured, Hemat could lead in a professional manner, but when left on his own he reverted to a less acceptable style. The Dutch chose not to work with him; the author chose to work closely with him. The author assigned a battalion to partner closely with the provincial police force as a whole and U.S. Army lieutenant colonel Erik L. Hefner to work personally with Hemat every day. By partnering closely with the police, CTU was able to improve their performance and deter corrupt behavior.

The Effective Governor

The provincial governor of Uruzgan, Mohammad Omar Shirzad, had begun to earn the respect of district chiefs, tribal elders, and Coalition leaders soon after taking office. As an Australian Parliamentary assessment of the situation in Uruzgan stated, "The local Afghan leadership is key to the development of a secure and safe province. The current Provincial Governor, Omar Shirzad, and Provincial Chief of Police (PCoP), Colonel Shirzad, are very effective . . . which has led to improved governance and development and, thus, improved security."[14]

Governor Shirzad was an outsider to Uruzgan, which enabled him to focus on the issues at hand without being encumbered by historical and tribal conflicts. The author quickly developed a trusting relationship with him, which helped overcome potential conflict when they took aggressive steps to stop 107-millimeter rockets from being fired at Camp Holland.[15]

The author's day typically ended at about midnight after a visit to the operations center, where he would receive the latest updates and talk to soldiers on duty. He would then walk back to his quarters beneath a million stars unobscured by ambient light. Once he turned in for the night, he knew that there was a good chance that Camp Holland would be attacked by 107-millimeter rockets that were fired from insurgents in nearby *qualas* (housing complexes). This occurred at least weekly; fortunately, the rockets were typically inaccurate. The insurgents usually hit Multinational Base Tarin Kowt but missed Camp Holland at the center of the base. The biggest scare CTU had was when insurgents fired 20 rockets on the checkpoint commander at Kakarak. There were no injuries, and the 4th Battalion of the U.S. Army's 70th Armor Regiment was able to coordinate with the aerostat to target a specific launch location.[16] A combined Afghan and Coalition patrol reacted to the attack.[17]

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[14] Susanne Schmeidl, "Uruzgan's New Police Chief: Mattiulah's Dream Comes True," Afghanistan Analysists Network, 8 April 2011; and "Visit to Tarin Kowt, Uruzgan," Parliament of Australia, accessed 11 November 2022. BGen Fazl Ahmad Sherzad replaced BGen Juma Gul Hemat on 1 April 2011.

[15] Author's notes, book 6, 23 February 2011.

To combat these rocket attacks, CTU focused its intelligence activities on the qualas that were in range of Camp Holland. The brigade directed patrolling patterns to the designated areas, and friendly contacts were activated to see if they could identify the culprits. National sources were used to help determine overall command and control aspects of the attacks. CTU's Singaporean counterbattery radar focused on the suspected targets, and cued cameras slung from a dirigible were able to accurately identify the compounds. By using all available resources to create a unified picture, CTU was able to confirm the location of the most common attacks as well as the quala and the name of the family in the quala.[18] As it turned out, the owner of the quala was a "friend" of Governor Shirzad. CTU first talked to the quala owner without success. The brigade then engaged the governor, who was skeptical of its conclusions and would not authorize Afghan or Coalition forces to take action against the suspects.

CTU's next step was to increase the frequency, duration, and sophistication of the patrols that were sent out nightly. The brigade coordinated aviation, special intelligence capabilities, ANA units, counterbattery radar, and other assets to find, fix, and eliminate the threat. Most of the rockets were being preset by differing fuse and detonation systems that were hard to detect prior to launch. The bomber typically set the rockets up, engaged the fuse, and left the area long before launch time. After several weeks of increased focus on destroying the bomber, Camp Holland was still getting hit several times a week.

Given the frustration of the continued attacks and the refusal of the governor to take action, the CTU intelligence team put together an information packet that used as much of the information that the team had acquired as possible.[19] Based on the CTU leadership's close relationship with Governor Shirzad, the packet was also shared with him. He was subsequently convinced that the rockets were coming from his friend's house. This judicious sharing of information with allies and partners is essential but only possible with trusted relationships. The decision to share information—but not sources—contributed directly to saving Coalition lives and prohibiting insurgent attacks on Multinational Base Tarin Kowt. The author had an excellent relationship with the governor, knew that he was friendly with the people in the bomber's quala, and had exhausted all other means of stopping the bomber. After the bomber hit the ANA's 8th Special Forces Kandak's (battalion) sleeping quarters—luckily without casualties—the author determined that the risk to CTU far outweighed the risk of divulging information. These factors fed straight into his decision-making process. The author thereby went directly to the governor and laid out the evidence, which compelled the governor to take more aggressive action. The author is sure that the fact that Afghan troops had been directly targeted also weighed into the governor's decision to act quickly. By the end of the week, the rocket attacks all but ceased.

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[16] Nichols, interview with the author, 20 September 2011.

[17] Nichols, interview with the author, 28 February 2011; and Cameron Stewart, "Rocket Warnings Saving Diggers," *Australian*, 31 January 2011.

[18] Nichols, interview with the author, 28 February 2011.

Afghan National Army Attacks on Coalition Forces

Green-on-blue attacks were infrequent but devastating in their impact. CTU experienced several attacks by Afghan soldiers.[20] These attacks jeopardized the close partnerships and relationships that the CTU leadership aimed to create at each forward operating base (FOB). The death of a teammate at the hands of friendly forces stressed the limits of relationships built at all levels. An initial response from these friendly forces was typically denial at the senior Afghan level. After long discussions and investigations, CTU was able to reach a common understanding of what had happened and plot a path forward, but the scars healed slowly and trust was difficult to fully restore.

One of the most egregious incidents of this nature occurred on 30 May 2011 at FOB Mashal.[21] The base was built to facilitate security along the new road between Tarin Kowt and Chora. The Australian mentors were coaching their Afghan partners to actively patrol the road and the terrain that could impact the road. A combined patrol left the compound early in the morning of 30 May, leaving only a small Afghan tower guard contingent and an Australian Army cook, Lance Corporal Andrew Gordon Jones, to guard the base.[22] After the patrol departed, Jones went outside the squad shelter into the base courtyard to take a break. He was shot and killed by one of the Afghan guards who was on duty in one of the base's towers. The guard immediately left the tower and escaped the base before the patrol returned. He was not captured after an extensive search. According to Australian minister for defense Stephen F. Smith, Jones' killer, Shafied Ullah, "was killed during a joint operation between U.S. special forces and Afghan troops near his home village in the Khowst province of eastern Afghanistan."[23]

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[19] The author held a private meeting with the governor to discuss the information available to CTU regarding attacks on Coalition and Afghan forces and solicit his support for curbing the rockets.
[20] Nichols, interview with the author, 30 May 2011.
[21] Nichols, interview with the author, 30 May 2011.
[22] "Lance Corporal Andrew Jones," Australian Army, accessed 11 November 2022.

The attack on Corporal Jones strained the close partnership between CTU and the ANA more than any other event. The team at FOB Mashal had been betrayed by their partners. At the ANA kandak and brigade level, leaders took measures to rotate Afghan soldiers out of the base. The Australian battle group rotated soldiers, as well, and counseled those involved. While efforts to restore the operational capability of FOB Mashal were successful, the level of effectiveness of partnered operations did not return to their previous levels. The relationships that CTU built with its Afghan partners prior to the attack fortunately enabled the base to continue operations, even if at a lower level of performance.

Maintain Open Communication to Leaders in Your Area of Responsibility and Recognize Their Strengths and Weaknesses

Working closely with Brigadier General Hemat enabled the Afghan police to improve their performance throughout Uruzgan. CTU was able to encourage the police to take quick action against "night letters," which were Taliban threats against locals who supported the Coalition. Hemat also took action to recruit new police officers who graduated from an academy that CTU ran at Tarin Kowt. He agreed to expand his police forces into former army outposts as CTU pushed out rule of law and government control of population centers. Hemat was never completely trustworthy, but CTU could work with him to improve specific conditions in the province.

Host-Nation Relationships Are Not Built Overnight

Culturally, Afghans do not build bonds quickly. Hundreds of cups of tea with provincial, district, and tribal elders began the process. Many meetings, *shuras* (meetings of tribal elders), and trips to various villages and towns in Uruzgan helped solidify trust, but the biggest challenge was setting reasonable objectives and working together to achieve successful outcomes. Sweating together as different parties devised plans and delivered solutions helped build ties that enabled them to overcome setbacks together and celebrate overall success.

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[23] Jeremy Thompson, "Rogue Soldier Who Killed Digger Shot Dead," Australian Broadcasting Corporation News, 20 June 2011.

Figure 10. Col Creighton with acting provincial governor Khodi Rahim

CREIGHTON
U.S. ARMY

Source: courtesy of the author.

Subordinate Battalion Relationships

In a coalition environment, building trust with one's subordinate commanders and staff begins with understanding cultural norms and listening more than speaking. After all, each person was given two ears and one mouth for a reason. Although CTU's subordinate organizations were nominally under the author's command, all those other than U.S. units had dual loyalties to their host nation's leadership. To create a positive command climate, the author focused on engaging with all subordinates as frequently as possible and listening to their ideas, input, and concerns.

The U.S. units under the author's command were all "borrowed" from their parent units, which had been ordered to contribute to CTU. The author coordinated directly with these organic parent units to make sure that there was complete understanding regarding who they reported to and how they were to be supported. He maintained open dialog with the parent units to avoid any misunderstanding. With the ground rules set, building the team followed. Battalion commanders and staff quickly bought into CTU's vision and mission and became vested in the brigade's success.

The author's relationship with the Australian battle group commander was more difficult to develop. CTU's task was far broader than the Australian remit, and CTU was tasked with partnering with the Afghan police, which was contrary to Australian directives. The Australian battle group was directed to "mentor" ANA units, which was interpreted very literally and did not include conducting counterinsurgency operations as CTU had been directed.[24] It was not permitted to hold or control terrain, which made assigning areas of responsibility and graphic coordination problematic. It was hesitant to support ANA expansion unless the idea came from the Afghan brigade or kandak commanders. ANA expansion into more remote areas of Uruzgan was not seen as a priority from the perspective of the Australian Battle Group, whereas it was seen as imperative from the perspective of CTU. Although similar, there were several distinct differences between the Australian battle group and the CTU viewpoints.

To overcome these differences, the author sought to understand the rules and limitations perceived by the Australian battle group leadership. Armed with this information, CTU was able to frame missions and task-organize forces to bridge the gap. The author worked closely with the Australian national leadership to make sure that all goals, objectives, and directives were acceptable. This process was neither easy nor quick. Building the relationship took patience, imagination, and polite persistence. Working together as professionals, the two leadership groups were able to achieve CTU's objectives while respecting Australian parameters. The understanding that was developed allowed for the expansion of ANA control throughout the eastern half of Uruzgan, which was the responsibility of the Afghan kandak mentored by the Australian battle group.

The aviation battalion, U.S. Special Forces Task Force 34, and Australian Special Forces Task Force 66 were all stationed at Tarin Kowt but were not assigned to CTU; they belonged to higher headquarters in Kabul and Kandahar. These units supported CTU indirectly through coordination at higher levels. If they wanted to operate in Uruzgan or Daykundi Provinces, they were required to gain CTU approval. Their operations had to support CTU's goals and objectives. All operations were coordinated in time and space. This informal command relationship required significant coordination. The author met with the three battalion commanders weekly, and officers were appointed from each unit to liaise with CTU. The author also met with their higher headquarters leadership on a regular basis.[25] The coordination and cooperation between CTU and these three units led to successful integration of independent assets.

Every coalition organization has its own unique circumstances. In the case of CTU, listening to leaders while engaging with them frequently allowed for effective command and control to be founded on solid relationships. These relationships reduced areas of friction and helped overcome challenges as they arose on the battlefield. Understanding the issues at hand and being willing to compromise and adjust plans to achieve both national goals and CTU requirements led to the establishment of a unified organization focused on a common mission.

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[24] Kevin M. Rudd, "Press Conference: Parliament House, Canberra: Troop Deployment in Afghanistan," PM Transcripts, Australian Government, 29 April 2009. The prime minister described the Australian mission within Afghanistan as follows: "Strategic denial of Afghanistan as a training ground and operating base for global terrorist organisations; . . . stabilisation of the Afghan state through a combination of military, police and civilian effort to the extent necessary to consolidate this primary mission of strategic denial; and . . . in Australia's case, to make this contribution in Oruzgan Province in partnership with our allies, with the objective of training sufficient Afghan National Army and police forces and to enhance the capacity of the Oruzgan provincial administration to hand over responsibility for the province in a reasonable time-frame to the Afghans themselves."

[25] Author's calendar, August 2010–June 2011.

Many Cups of Tea: The First Step to a Solid Relationship

A leader should not expect to make important decisions immediately. Trust must be built by listening attentively, delivering on promises (only promise what you know you can deliver), and having the patience to nurture the relationship.

Meet People in Their Own Space

A leader should take the time and exert the energy to engage with all of their teams at their own place of work. This will result in the development of trusted relationships in which partners hold each other accountable.

Maintain Constant Daily Interaction

In many cultures, multiple meetings are required to build a solid relationship. Consistent engagement without micromanagement will help build solid teams far more effectively than infrequent meetings. Working with subordinates and lateral organizations at project sites and on patrol enhances the understanding and trust.

The Importance of Travel and Presence

If a leader is working with a host-nation counterpart, wherever the leader goes, the host-nation counterpart should go along. The leader should let them take the lead.

Recognize Different Relationships with Many Sectors

A leader who is a part of many teams must know what their position is on each team. In the case of CTU, the author had to understand his position among Coalition forces, the ANSF, the Afghan government, NGOs, the PRT, Afghan elders, *mullahs* (Muslim clergy leaders), *maliks* (village representatives), “water lords,” and many others.

Organizations and Nations Have Different Ways of Looking at Things

Leaders need to come to a clear understanding through close communication and cooperation to work together to be successful. A leader must leave their pride at the door, be prepared to compromise, and make sure they do what is right.

The Enemy Does Not Recognize Borders

The U.S. Marines in Helmand Province on CTU's southwest flank, in the vicinity of Kajaki Dam, offered an example of a border that could have been exploited by the Taliban. CTU coordinated with the Marines at Camp Leatherneck to make sure that there was no gap in the CTU–Marine boundary that could be exploited by the enemy.

Facilitate Compromise

A leader must know how and when to compromise. This is the art of getting people from different backgrounds to take their feelings and pride out of the decision-making process and get on with figuring out how to get things done.

Making Difficult Decisions

One of the most difficult decisions the author had to make during his command of CTU concerned the removal of a senior U.S. Army officer who openly questioned the direction of the chain of command relating to the authority of non-U.S. senior officers. This behavior could not be tolerated, especially in an integrated Coalition unit operating in a combat environment. This officer was an outstanding major who had been tasked by the Army's 2d Armored Cavalry Regiment to fill the billet of CTU operations officer. He was technically and tactically excellent and had prior service in Afghanistan as an operation officer. He spearheaded CTU's organization and planning efforts in Kandahar and was responsible for all operational activities in Uruzgan and Daykundi Provinces, all duties that he performed well. It was his attitude that got him into trouble. His arrogance and "United States-first" opinions sparked the ire of both the Dutch and Australian contingents. The first incident occurred when he told a Dutch officer that unless the Dutch complied with an order, he would retaliate with inappropriate resource denial. After this incident, which caused international discord, the author counseled him both in writing and verbally. The second incident was similar but involved questioning a senior Australian officer's authority within the CTU command structure. After this second incident, the author relieved him of his duties and sent him back to his home unit. The author could not tolerate actions that disparaged teammates inappropriately. Fortunately, the author was able to hire a fantastic Kiwi officer to fill the position, which turned out better for CTU in the long run. A second-order impact was that the international members of CTU recognized that the author's focus was on CTU's mission regardless of nationality. According to the first deputy commander of CTU and the senior Australian Army officer in Uruzgan, Colonel Jason Blain:

> CTU leadership left no one . . . in doubt; we were all one team with the same objective. Combat leaders also invested in engaging with the sol-

> diers and civilians of CTU and explaining [the] commander's intent and expectations with them. As Australians we felt absolutely part of the same team, exemplified by the fully integrated nature of the CTU headquarters, where the mutual respect and professional collaboration between U.S. and Australian personnel was instrumental in achieving the mission.[26]

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[26] MajGen Jason Blain, ADF, interview with the author, 20 March 2022.

CHAPTER 8

Shades of Gray

Know Who to Trust and How Much to Trust Them

One day prior to assuming command of Combined Team Uruzgan (CTU), the author faced a dilemma that exemplified the larger difficulties facing Western efforts in Afghanistan. On 31 July 2010, Afghans in Uruzgan Province who were associated with the Taliban accused Coalition forces of "stabbing" a Koran.[1] There was concern among the Afghan leaders in the provincial capital of Tarin Kowt that there would be widespread unrest in the Mirabad Valley, which was located just eight kilometers from Camp Holland, the regional headquarters of the Dutch command representing the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in Afghanistan. The Coalition forces were then transitioning from Dutch control to a combined organization of nine countries under the author's command.[2]

A local warlord, Matiullah Khan, approached the Coalition leaders and offered to broker a meeting between the local Afghan tribal elders who believed that a NATO soldier had stabbed the Koran and Coalition and Afghan government leaders who knew that the charges were false. Dutch authorities considered Khan a criminal and had refused to work with him. As the incoming Coalition leader in Uruzgan, the author decided that although Khan had likely committed illegal acts, as a local tribal leader, he was best placed to defuse the situation.[3]

In the Warlord's Den

At Matiullah Khan's headquarters, a group of five U.S. and Australian Coalition representatives were led into a long, narrow room in which approximately 100 Afghan leaders were assembled. Khan; the provincial chief of police, Afghan National Police (ANA) brigadier general Juma Gul Hemat; Afghan National Army (ANA) brigadier general Abdul Hamid; and Afghan National Directorate of Security (NDS) brigadier general Aziz Zakaria led the Coalition representatives through a narrow gauntlet that opened to the front of the room. There, the Coalition representatives sat down in front of a small lectern while their Afghan partners moved to their own places at the head of the assemblage. At the lectern, a *mullah* (Muslim clergy leader) wearing a black turban began ranting. With eyes ablaze, he exhorted the

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[1] Author's notes, book 2, 27 July 2010. The events described in this chapter are based on notes the author took at the time and the impacts that this incident had on his thought process while in command of CTU.
[2] "Dutch Draw-Down," Deutsche Welle, 23 February 2010.
[3] Col James L. Creighton, "Shades of Gray in Afghanistan," *Diplomat*, 8 April 2015; and Author's notes, book 2, 7–9 July 2010.

Afghans in the room to defy the Coalition and local Afghan leaders, to kill Coalition soldiers, and to take retribution for the blasphemous act of stabbing a Koran. After 45 minutes of this tirade, Brigadier General Hamid moved forward and suggested politely that it would be best for the Coalition representatives to leave.

The Coalition representatives spent the next four hours in Khan's office waiting for the meeting to conclude. Finally, their Afghan partners arrived to inform them that the issue had been resolved and that the assembled Afghans were on their way home. The Coalition leaders were told that the chief of police, Brigadier General Hemat, had stood before the podium and looked each Afghan in the eye, telling them to swear on the Koran that they had witnessed the incident. When everyone in the room denied having witnessed this evident sacrilege, Hemat concluded that if no one could swear on the Koran that they witnessed the incident, it did not happen. Convinced of the facts through exhaustive discussion and debate in an Afghan *shura* (meeting of tribal elders), the assembled Afghan leaders filed out of the hall and headed home, content that the Koran had not been violated.

The Warlord: Friend or Foe?

As the senior Coalition commander in the room, the author faced a dilemma. Should he work with the Afghan warlord who had defused the Koran crisis, or should he follow the Dutch example and spurn those Afghan leaders who were believed to be corrupt and criminal? Was it better to follow a black-and-white path and only cooperate with Afghans who met strict Western definitions of appropriate conduct, or was it better to accept the leaders on the ground as constituted within a spectrum of shades of gray? If he chose the latter, how should the author distinguish shades of gray? At what point is a person too gray (neutral), and approaching black (bad), to be tolerated? These were the critical questions the author faced as he prepared to take command of CTU the next day.

The Dutch assessment of Matiullah Khan was very critical.[4] They had gathered credible evidence that Khan's uncle, Jan Mohammad Kahn, a tribal leader, warlord, and deposed governor of Uruzgan, had recruited him to enforce order in the region.[5] In this role, Matiullah Khan was accused of killing local Afghans and Taliban fighters for his uncle. Khan was a colonel in the ANP and commanded a 2,000-strong private police militia, Kandak Amniante Uruzgan (KAU).[6] The provincial chief of police, Brigadier General Hemat, accused Khan of charging the Afghan government for KAU policemen who did not exist. The KAU was accused by local tribal leaders of attacking local Afghans who were unaffiliated with the Taliban and torturing captured prisoners. Khan was known to overcharge Coalition forces for security of its convoys traveling for 22 hours along the 260 kilometers of dirt road from the city of Kandahar to Tarin Kowt, known as "Route Bear." If the Coalition refused to pay the inflated charges, incidents along the route increased.[7] Khan was accused of instigating these attacks to justify the security requirements. Coalition leaders, principal elders of opposing Afghan tribes, and local Afghans shared these concerns. Although Khan was never indicted or convicted, there was a pattern of suspicious behavior associated with his actions in and around Uruzgan.[8]

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[4] Bette Dam, "The Story of 'M': U.S.-Dutch Shouting Matches in Uruzgan," Afghanistan Analysts Network, 10 June 2010.
[5] "Uruzgan Endgame," *Dutch News*, 19 April 2010.
[6] "Matiullah Khan," Afghan War News, accessed 11 November 2022.

The Australian and U.S. special operations forces in the region had a much different assessment than the Dutch. In their view, Khan was a warrior who hated the Taliban and would readily provide well-trained and effective augmentation to combat operations. His KAU units provided excellent security along Route Bear, with minimal loss of equipment and supplies to Coalition convoys.[9] He escorted medical and humanitarian goods at no charge. The author personally witnessed Khan's ability to quietly broker agreements between competing tribes who were fighting over a wide variety of issues. He presided over a regular "Thursday shura," during which local Afghans, usually women, would ask for assistance with opening businesses, supporting schools, building athletic facilities, and other basic needs. Khan was able to provide assistance, resolve problems, and support the local community. His ability to gather leaders from local tribes to help resolve disputes was a critical element in sustaining relative peace in Uruzgan. While there are conflicting opinions regarding the ultimate purpose behind his civic actions, it is true that Khan assisted the Coalition in maintaining security in and keeping the Taliban out of Uruzgan.

The author had a decision to make. He faced two major dilemmas: how to work with Khan without compromising Dutch cooperation; and whether to view Khan as a corrupt warlord or as an effective and reliable military commander and supporter of Coalition operations. From his own perspective, the author saw Khan neither as all white (good), as did the Coalition special operations forces, nor all black (bad), as did the Dutch. Instead, he viewed Khan as a deep shade of gray. The author accepted that Khan was a commissioned colonel in the ANP who, despite a trail of ostensibly incriminating actions, was an effective military leader and supported Coalition security operations. The author recognized that although Khan's suspect past and current dealings were not acceptable in the view of official Western practices, they fell under the tacit moral aegis of the ANP, the provincial governor, and the Afghan president. From the author's perspective, it was better to work with an accepted and appointed Afghan leader despite conspicuous flaws than to marginalize him due to accusations of improper behavior. The author concluded that building a cautious and wary relationship with Khan was better for the security of Uruzgan than confronting him and working at cross purposes, which would potentially create another enemy.

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[7] *The Dutch Engagement in Uruzgan, 2006–2010: A TLO Socio-Political Assessment* (Kabul: Liaison Office, 2010), 45.
[8] Paul McGeogh, "The Desert King," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 16 March 2013.
[9] McGeogh, "The Desert King."

Khan was a quiet, enigmatic tribal leader who had risen to the rank of brigadier general in the ANP.[10] He cared deeply for his people, despised the Taliban, and was instrumental in maintaining security in the region. He worked closely with the Coalition to eliminate Taliban influence in Uruzgan. By working with Khan and other leaders in Uruzgan, all of whom were different shades of gray, CTU was able to dramatically increase the volume of goods in all provincial *bazaars* (outdoor markets), build a 42-kilometer asphalt road between Tarin Kowt and Chora, more than double the number of Afghan children in school, and all but eliminate Taliban influence in the province.

During the author's last flight from Gizab, a small, mountainous village located north of Tarin Kowt, he noticed that what 10 months earlier had been pitch black was now shining bright with a multitude of lights. The lights of progress shone too; security and economic growth was made possible by working with local leaders who helped create a more stable environment in Uruzgan, despite the murky gray character of some of the leaders and rigid perceptions of black and white on the part of the Coalition.

Matiullah Khan was killed in a targeted suicide bombing in Kabul in March 2015.[11]

Leadership Lessons Learned

Assess Levels of Trust

Similar assessments to that of Matiullah Khan had to be made on every person contacted by CTU and other Coalition units. Most of these people were varying shades of gray. ANP brigadier general Juma Gul Hemat, the provincial chief of police, was more black than white, and the Dutch would barely speak to him, if at all.[12] The author chose to engage with Hemat fully, assigning U.S. Army lieutenant colonels Douglas A. Simms II and David S. Oeschger to partner directly with him. U.S. Army lieutenant colonel Eric L. Hefner was assigned the task of basically living with Hemat and serving as his personal mentor. Thanks to these intense partnership efforts, the author assessed that Hemat personally transformed and improved to some extent. The payoff was the increased professionalism and expansion of the provincial police force, which was seen through far fewer reports against the police as well as the dramatic expansion of police presence throughout Uruzgan Similar decisions were made to engage with leaders in the Afghan government, the ANA, and local tribes. The major lessons the author took from this experience was to engage as widely as possible; to perform one's due diligence; to know an individual's past performance; to accept the individual at face value; and to enter into a relationship with eyes open. To expect every leader to live up to Western expectations of perfection is unrealistic and serves only to limit one's capacity for effectiveness.

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[10] McGeogh, "The Desert King."
[11] Azam Ahmed, "Powerful Afghan Police Chief Killed in Kabul," *New York Times*, 19 March 2015.
[12] Dam, "The Story of 'M'."

Weigh Risks and Rewards

In assessing who to deal with in Uruzgan, the author closely studied both risks and rewards. If he did not work with Matiullah Khan, the potential for intense animosity between the Afghan leaders in the Mirabad Valley and the Australian forces operating there was acute. If he let Brigadier General Hemat operate independent of Coalition partnership, he ran the risk of condoning night raids by the Afghan police, furthering police brutality, and forgoing the ability to secure population centers as the ANA moved out to secure lines of communication. By working with these individuals who were more black than white, the author exposed himself to the risk that he would be perceived as corrupt by association. The author concluded that it was worth the risk to work with them to accomplish CTU's mission while also guarding against enabling further corruption. In the end, the author believes that CTU ultimately reduced the level of corruption in Uruzgan by partnering closely with these Afghan leaders.

Understand Mission Impact

Critical to the decision-making process for these issues was their impact on the successful accomplishment of CTU's mission. Could the author achieve this mission without compromising his integrity? If he did not work with these Afghan leaders, would he fail in his mission? Could he mitigate the impact of relationships with people who were a darker shade of gray? By asking himself these questions after studying the individuals with whom he could work, the author came to conclusions that he felt were wise and prudent. He felt that he could take responsibility for his actions and the actions of those he was working with given the way the relationships were formed.

Constant coordination with CTU's higher headquarters helped to validate the author's assessment. Both commanders of Regional Command South, British Army major general Sir Nicholas P. Carter and U.S. Army major general James L.

Figure 11. Col Creighton and Matiullah Kahn

CTU
D TEAM
U.S. ARMY
EIGHTON

Source: courtesy of the author.

Terry, agreed with the author. They understood the risks that he was taking and felt that to make progress in Uruzgan the Coalition should consider both the positive and negative aspects associated with working with local leaders.

By the time the author left Uruzgan in June 2011, CTU was able to get Brigadier General Hemat replaced by Brigadier General Fazl Ahmad Sherzad, which made a substantial positive impact on both performance and corruption within the ANP.[13] By working with all the leaders of varying shades of gray in Uruzgan, CTU was able to maximize their potential while also working to minimize the impact of their negative traits.

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[13] Susanne Schmeidl, "Uruzgan's New Police Chief: Mattiulah's Dream Comes True," Afghanistan Analysists Network, 8 August 2011.

CHAPTER 9

"The Jerry Springer Show, Afghanistan"

Courage and the Ability to Adapt to Ambiguity

The first *shura* (meeting of tribal elders) that the author attended in Uruzgan Province took place in the district of Chora on 10 August 2010. This experience helped him better understand the cultural dynamics of local governance in Afghanistan as represented in the district-level shuras.[1] This particular shura was more like an episode of the *Jerry Springer* television talk show than an actual functioning governmental meeting. It began with warm greetings for the acting provincial governor, Khodi Rahim, and his team and a welcoming but tentative greeting for the new Combined Team Uruzgan (CTU) team. The acting governor had not been to Chora in a long time, so there were many critical issues that had not been addressed. The meeting quickly devolved into a shouting match between the Chora elders and the Uruzgan provincial leadership, which escalated as tempers rose and fights broke out. The author was sitting along the wall next to Afghan National Police (ANP) brigadier general Juma Gul Hemat and Australian Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) director Bernard Philip. The author found what was unfolding before him a bit disconcerting, but he recognized the confrontation as an excellent opportunity to learn how to operate in the complex environment of Uruzgan.

Background for this shura is provided by the PRT political officer posted in Chora, Iain Campbell Smith of the Australian Foreign Ministry, whose diary entries offer insight into the complex environment in Chora in August 2010. Smith describes in detail the challenges associated with working with people from different countries and organizations who possess diverse perspectives and experiences.

> *9 August 2010*
> The [CTU] party rolled in on two [Boeing CH-47 Chinook transport helicopters] at about 1000 hours. [The shura] started with 12 persons but all the local ANA [Afghan National Army] and ANP [Afghan National Police] showed up in force looking more alert, and numerous, than [we had] ever seen them. I guess that's what happens when the bosses come to town. We started with a brief in the Dutch mess. As the brief ended, I snapped at the [platoon leader]. The [platoon leader] wanted to stick to plan A,

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[1] Author's calendar, 10 August 2010. The description of events corresponding to the Chora shura on this date are based on the author's recollection.

which was [to] take the seniors around the base [and] then leave at 1100. I wanted to take the package [CTU leadership] straight to the White Compound because it was 1030 and I knew there would be a bunch of nationals waiting for us. Anyway, you [have] to let the military machine run [at] its own pace, so that's what we did. It wasn't appropriate for me to snap, and I felt [bad] afterwards. I was short [on] sleep and not in great shape mentally. It [had] been a long time since proper leave.

Anyway, we rolled down to the White Compound with a package [CTU leadership] that must have numbered 100, [including] ANA and ANP. When we got there, there were about 120 local men there to greet us—a huge turnout for Chora. For a while there, I was thinking I might have been wrong about the visit being badly timed. Everything was swell for the first half hour with various speakers mouthing platitudes. An old fella named Khaksar—apparently the local poet, historian and pharmacist—got up and raved for 10 minutes about the place of Chora in global history, referring at various points to the [1989] fall of the Berlin Wall, the 1969 moon landing, and a number of other historical events that the [interpreters] did not bother to relate to us. He finished, and people applauded politely.

Then it exploded. Haji Mohammad "Thin" Sadiq proclaimed that [district chief Mohammad Dawood Khan] needed to be sacked. Someone else yelled back. Then a little old man got up and started abusing them all. Shoes were thrown, then boots. Then some pushing and shoving and shouting and yelling, and a few ANP guys stepped in to shut some blokes up. Then a rabble of [people] spilled out onto the landing, where there was more pushing and shoving and abusive language, a few slaps [and] then some punches thrown. [ANP brigadier general Juma Gul Hemat, the provincial chief of police,] punched somebody hard and hurt his knuckles. The ANP guys belonging to Sadiq and [Khan] cocked their weapons. My PRT soldiers made to wade in but were held back. This went on for about 10 minutes or so before . . . [people] rolled out the dining cloths on the floor and started bringing out platters of mutton and saffron rice. Seeing the food arrive put things into perspective in a country where one should eat protein whenever [they] see it, and the [locals] ceased their fisticuffs and we all sat down to eat like nothing had happened.

10 August 2010

I should have been more adamant about delaying the shura. The whole thing was a [disaster] and only deepened the existing fractures in [Chora].

> Though [PRT director Bernard Philip] was right in saying [that] we should be supporting the district government [and] not the personality that was [district chief Mohammad Dawood Khan], we [were there] to promote harmony between the nationals and minimize the opportunity for insurgents to exploit fractures in the community. . . . The “fighting shura,” as it became known, only inflamed those fractures. . . . A shura of that size was a once-a-year opportunity to bring the government to the people, and it went to shit. The following day we had a post-mortem with Khan’s chief of staff, who came in to the base. He said, “It was planned, a kind of ambush. [Brigadier General Juma Gul Hemat] called a few guys in the valley the day before and told them to complain about [Khan] and start a fight. [Khodi Rahim, the acting provincial governor,] knew about this and went along with it. You saw how happy they were walking back to the base. This would not have happened if [Khan] had been there. They wouldn’t have spoken like that to his face.[2]

Learning from the Shura in Chora

By design, CTU integrated Australian and U.S. soldiers with ANP units down to the platoon level. The International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) mandated partnership with the ANP at all levels. U.S. soldiers were the only ones in CTU authorized to “partner” with the ANP.[3] To comply with the ISAF directive, a U.S. Army platoon was attached to the Australian Mentoring Task Force, which was responsible for mentoring the ANA kandak (battalion) in Chora. The U.S. platoon partnered with the district police chief in Chora, Mohammad Gul, to help develop the ANP’s professionalism and improve their performance. The U.S. platoon leader reported to the Australian battle group commander in Chora. The platoon received tactical direction and most logistics support from the Australian battle group.

As summarized in the introduction to this chapter, on 10 August 2010, CTU leadership flew into Forward Operating Base (FOB) Mirwais, near the Chora district center, with the acting provincial governor, Khodi Rahim; ANP brigadier general Juma Gul Hemat; ANA brigadier general Abdul Hamid; Afghan ministry directors; and other Coalition leaders to conduct a shura with the Chora district chief, Mohammad Dawood Kahn, and other district elders. The provincial government had not visited Chora in many months, and there were significant issues that need to be addressed regarding security, health, welfare, and economic growth. The group walked about a kilometer from FOB Mirwais to the district center, where district leaders were offered the opportunity to discuss their issues with the acting governor. These issues ranged from concern about security in the neighborhood of a new dam, to the status of an almond-processing factory that had been constructed by the Dutch, to the lack of teachers in newly established schools, to concern over the threat of Pakistani nuclear weapons pointed at Afghanistan in general and Uruzgan Province in particular.

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[2] Iain C. Smith, diary entry, 9–10 August 2010, sent to the author via email, 10 April 2022.

[3] Ran Yosef, *Afghanistan: Tactical Directive on the Employment of Force* (Geneva, Switzerland: IHL in Action, International Committee of the Red Cross, 2009).

The shura was conducted in a large room in the back of the district center building. Two sets of double glass doors led into the room from the east side of the building. These sets of doors were separated by a wall of windows that faced out from the room onto a beautiful grass courtyard with many roses and other flowers in full bloom. At the opposite side of the courtyard were the district offices. Inside the shura room was a large Afghan carpet, which covered 90 percent of the floor space. The walls were plain with very little decor or pictures. The east wall was covered by windows above a 30-inch sill. The north, south, and west walls were made of solid stone and plaster. The room was filled with more than 120 elders from the surrounding region. All were focused on engaging the acting governor and his team. All were looking for answers and solutions.

Chora had been a focus for the Dutch development activities that took place throughout Uruzgan during the previous six years.[4] The Dutch had initiated many projects aimed at improving the health, welfare, and economic conditions in the district.[5] Discussion with the district elders emphasized that many projects had been executed but much of the benefit was far less than anticipated. Dozens of wells had been dug, but as one walked the streets it appeared that they were not in use. As the elders explained, the wells had been dug to approximately 45 meters deep. The draw on the district's aquifer from all these wells had reduced the available water to a trickle. The Dutch had also built an almond-processing factory near the *bazaar* (outdoor market) in the district's downtown. Training, implementation, and operation of the factory's equipment had not translated into a successful business.

Finally, there were concerns regarding "Taliban attacks" in and around the Teri Rud River region. As the elders described the issue in private, the Taliban was not involved in these attacks. A dam that had been built upstream to help irrigate crops had siphoned water away from downstream villages. The violence that was occurring in the region was not caused by Taliban fighters but rather by downstream villagers who were retaliating against upstream villagers for "theft of their water." Many of these issues were created by well-intentioned efforts by the Coalition to help the people of Chora that had backfired due to unforeseen second- and third-order effects. Recognizing that CTU could create similar challenges for the people of Uruzgan helped shape the methodology and systems that were used as the brigade began operations.

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[4] Mark Magnier, "The World: Dutch Troops' Method Offers Lesson: In an Afghan Province, They've Long Followed Practices at the Heart of a New U.S. Mantra," *Los Angeles Times*, 13 November 2009.

[5] "Afghanistan: Dutch Hand over Security of Chora Valley," Australian Department of Defence, 16 July 2010.

During the shura, which at times included heated discussion, there was a commotion in the garden outside the room.[6] Brigadier Generals Hemat and Hamid stepped out to assess the situation and take action as appropriate. While outside, Hemat had an argument with the Chora district police chief, Mohammad Gul, regarding security arrangements for the shura. He also wanted to take the opportunity to pay the district police officers their monthly salary. The argument turned physical when Hemat punched his subordinate in the face. Gul subsequently returned to his police station with his men, while Hemat returned to the shura, indicating that the problem had been solved. While Gul was returning to his station, the shura abruptly came to a heated end. Hamid grabbed the author and situated an escort around him as they surged forward with the crowd of now unsettled elders. The crowd moved through the doors, across the beautiful courtyard, through the office building, and out into the main district center compound. Once outside, there was a sense of uneasiness between the district and provincial police.[7]

Meanwhile, Mohammad Gul had returned to his headquarters, rounded up the rest of his police officers, and set out to return to the shura site to exact retribution. Gul had his weapon drawn, but before he reached the district center compound, he was met by his mentor, a U.S. Army lieutenant, who was accompanied by a handful of U.S. soldiers. The lieutenant was able to calm the district police chief and convince him that he should not confront his superior over the incident. Their discussion was tense and threatening on both sides. The lieutenant was a direct subordinate of the commander of the Australian battle group in Chora and took direction from his Australian chain of command during this event. Establishing and adhering to well-defined lines of communication and authority enabled the lieutenant to react to and resolve what could have been a catastrophic incident. He had built a solid trusting relationship with the district police chief. Clearly defined lines of authority and trust between partners prevented what could have been a serious setback to CTU's progress in Uruzgan.

With the friction defused and calmer heads prevailing, all parties met again for lunch. After returning to FOB Mirwais, the CTU leadership assessed its good fortune at being able to recover from a bad situation while having a clearer understanding of the challenges facing Coalition efforts in Chora. The courage and quick response of a young lieutenant had prevented what could have been a terrible firefight between the district and provincial police. The CTU leadership realized that the provincial police chief's reputation for overbearing control and violence was justified. He could be helpful in certain situations but dangerous in others. The CTU leadership also recognized that although the assessments and numbers regarding the Coalition's development efforts in Chora were impressive and positive, the end result came with some baggage and challenges that had to be resolved to keep moving forward. Finally, the CTU leadership recognized that the district leadership in Chora was less than ideal and would require more oversight and support than was originally anticipated. Having a better understanding of the environment and personalities on the ground ultimately helped the CTU leadership develop more realistic plans and expectations.

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[6] Smith, diary entry, 9–10 August 2010.
[7] Smith, diary entry, 9–10 August 2010.

Leadership Lessons Learned

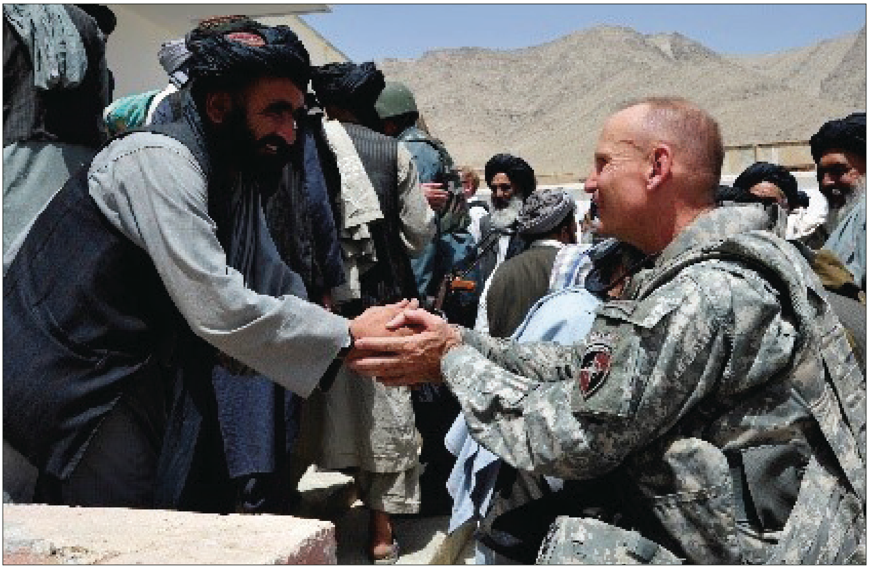
Courage

Courage and conviction displayed by junior leaders was paramount to resolving this incident. The ability of a young lieutenant to recognize a dangerous situation and take decisive but not necessarily aggressive action to resolve a tense and volatile incident represents exceptional leadership. The lieutenant was able to control his own emotions as well as those of his troops to stand in the way of someone determined to attack. The lieutenant had built a solid relationship with the district police chief and was able to use that relationship to reason with him. Standing in the face of danger and coolly talking people out of their worst intentions requires exceptional courage and determination.

Adaptability

The shura in Chora began as a peaceful meeting between provincial government representatives, the district chief, and more than 100 tribal elders, all of whom were dedicated to making life better for the people living in the district. Initial discussions were positive and sought compromise as well as reasonable solutions. This positive atmosphere of traditional governance led the author and his fellow leaders to believe that the shura would be conducted in a constructive environment. They had recognized that the shura would be a target of the Taliban and planned accordingly. What they did not consider was that violence and disruption would come from within the police forces themselves. The ability of leaders to quickly adapt to the conflicts that arose between police leaders enabled an ultimately positive outcome with no injuries or deaths. Leaders recognized potential escalation, devised alternative plans, communicated with their soldiers and other

Figure 12. Local elders held high expectations prior to the start of the shura



Source: courtesy of the author.

leaders, redeployed their forces, and successfully defused the situation. The ability to understand an environment and quickly respond to changes in plans represents the adaptability required of exceptional leaders.

Trust in Subordinates

Building trusting relationships within one's team is vital to maximizing performance. In Chora, the CTU leadership understood the competence of the team it had trained, and it let the U.S. Army lieutenant handle the situation in the Chora police barracks. The lieutenant had been trained well and had spent weeks cultivating his relationship with the district police chief. The CTU leadership trusted the lieutenant to do their job without micromanagement. Had there been a different platoon leader in position, the CTU leadership may have come to a different conclusion. There may have been someone in the position who was new, who had not yet built a relationship with the police chief, or who was not as competent. If that had been the case, the author may have felt compelled to provide more oversight. Knowing the character of one's subordinates and understanding their strengths and weaknesses allows a leader to determine what leadership style will be most effective. Recognizing that each person responds differently to various leadership styles is important in knowing how to effectively motivate people and determining how much oversight is required.

CHAPTER 10

Building Development Capacity in Uruzgan

Lead without Direct Authority

Providing the means for the government of Afghanistan to build the infrastructure and systems required to adequately care for its people translated into a massive development program. The program in Uruzgan Province was aggregated at more than $266 million (USD) from many countries, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and international organizations dedicated to improving conditions for the Afghans living there.[1] With multiple nations supporting operations in Uruzgan, Combined Team Uruzgan (CTU) had the advantage of approaching a wide variety of potential donors willing to contribute to the effort in the province. That said, there were disadvantages as well. The immense amount of money available presented challenges with prioritization and coordination. The remote nature of Uruzgan made it difficult to adequately oversee development programs and projects. Rotation of people responsible for individual activities complicated the ability to see projects through to completion. Coordinating with Afghans who were at times well-meaning and at other times corrupt was further complicated by their lack of formal education and knowledge of ever-changing Coalition rules and regulations. The complexity of the development effort in Uruzgan led to some projects and programs becoming successful beyond all expectation while many others were abject failures.[2]

Following a patrol in Chora District on 27 November 2010, the author conducted an after-action discussion that reflects some of his frustrations with the development activities in Uruzgan:

> We stopped in the market and picked up 20 pounds of almonds. We bought $10 worth of bread, which is about 25 or 30 bread discs, and gave those to all the troops. Very frustrating for me, we passed a [water] well in front of a house that doesn't have a pump that should. That pump was never put in. We passed a mosque where there was supposed to be a pump, but it wasn't there. We went into a school . . . building [that] had been started but not completed 2 years ago and so it was just sitting there waiting for the roofing and stairs. We talked about the teachers, who were intimidated. Teachers who had been kidnapped and beaten.

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[1] "Uruzgan Project Overview," Provincial Reconstruction Team report, June 2011. This report includes the physical projects scheduled for Uruzgan as of June 2010. It does not include other health, education, and governance activities that did not require physical infrastructure expenditures, nor does it include projects that had already been completed. An overview of these development opportunities can be found in appendix C.

[2] Author's notes, book 4, 17 October 2010.

> The school was [built] for 800 and there were 200 children there because their parents were afraid to send them to class because of the Taliban, and so the people were asking for additional security, which we will work with the ANSF [Afghan National Security Forces]. But the kids there are just taking their final exams. The teachers seem motivated and brave and we just have to do a better job of helping them through giving them books and desks.[3]

The Road from Chora to Tarin Kowt

The Dutch and German governments cooperated to build a 42-kilometer asphalt road between the provincial capital of Tarin Kowt and the town of Chora.[4] This road had never been paved. It served as the main artery between the two largest population centers in Uruzgan, and local leaders all agreed that it was essential to improving the overall conditions of the province. Intense local leadership involvement and support of the plan to improve the road was extremely important. The road project was successfully implemented largely due to local government and tribal support. Many other projects did not have adequate or balanced local leadership support, which dramatically reduced the chances of success.

Security along the proposed route was tenuous at best. Tribal disputes compounded by Taliban influence created a dangerous environment for road builders. Local leaders in villages along the route all recognized the opportunity to earn money by providing security for the road. Local warlord and Afghan National Police colonel Matiullah Khan also saw the road as a potential cash opportunity. In some cases, tribal leaders and Khan may have worsened the security along the route themselves to increase security concerns and create more demand for guards. Competition among parties who wanted to capitalize on providing security along the route could have inadvertently increased the security price due to more attacks, which, again, may well have been self-generated. The Dutch approached this issue in a systematic and pragmatic way, ignoring Khan and engaging with local leaders in each village along the route. By holding numerous *shuras* (meetings of tribal elders) and hosting discussions with leaders, the Dutch were able to negotiate a security plan that adequately represented each village's individual needs. Security along the route was stable throughout the duration of the road-building project, with only a few minor skirmishes reported.[5]

The contract for the road project was administered by the German government

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[3] Capt Margaret Nichols, ADF, interview with the author, 27 September 2010.

[4] For more details about the challenges in building the Tarin Kowt-to-Chora road from a firsthand perspective, see David Savage, "AusAID Stabilisation," in *Niche Wars: Australia in Afghanistan and Iraq, 2001–2014*, ed. John Blaxland, Marcus Fielding, and Thea Gellerfy (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 2020), 229–48.

[5] Author's notes, book 3, 9 September 2010.

development agency, German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ). Payment was made in partial installments on a regular basis. Payment was based on work completed and was not made prior to segment completion. Progress was inspected regularly and checked for both speed of completion and quality of work. The profit margin expected by the main contractor was withheld until after completion and certification of the road. While these are all standard contracting practices in the West, they were seldom seen in Afghanistan. Working in remote areas of Uruzgan with minimal security made implementing standard best practices difficult, but when they were followed they worked.

The 42-kilometer asphalt road was completed on time. It featured a yellow dotted line with proper shoulders on both sides. Traffic improved dramatically in both directions. Small shops and businesses opened along the side of the road, and the *bazaars* (outdoor markets) in Tarin Kowt and Chora increased both in volume of sales and quality of goods. Based on the author's own personal experience, the travel time between Tarin Kowt and Chora was reduced from 4 hours to 20 minutes. The vision of the Afghan government, tribal elders, and Coalition leaders was truly realized.[6]

The Malalai Girls School

The Afghan leaders in Tarin Kowt recognized that although their boys' school was adequate and improving by Afghan standards, they had no way of educating girls. These leaders coordinated with the Australian Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT), which agreed to build the Malalai girls school down the street from the boys' school and next door to the new (unfinished) police station. The Australians followed the Dutch model by maintaining close coordination with local leaders to determine a high priority urgent need, implementing proper security arrangements, producing and agreeing to a reasonable contract that defined expectations that could be met and delivered on time, implementing sound contracting procedures, and maintaining aggressive quality assurance and inspection rules.[7] The Malalai girls' school became a model for all Afghan schools. It was completed in a timely manner with funded teachers, adequate supplies and furniture, and prospects for success that were unrivaled in any of the other approximately 150 reported schools in Uruzgan. An unintended benefit of the project that was partially attributable to the investment being made in education in Afghanistan was that the PRT was able to coordinate for Afghan teachers to be trained in India for eventual service in

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[6] "Tarin Kowt–Chora Road Construction," Provincial Reconstruction Team report, 6 April 2011.

[7] "A+ for Effort: New Girls' School Opens in Tarin Kot, Afghanistan," Australian Department of Defence, 1 August 2011.

Uruzgan.[8] A long lead time was needed to fully implement this project, but it had the potential to offer lasting positive impacts. Development projects such as this that were properly implemented demonstrated a dramatic impact in the province.

Tarin Kowt Jail

When the provincial education minister in Uruzgan was arrested for child abuse in the fall of 2010, he was sent to jail, which was located in a small building across the street from the governor's mansion in Tarin Kowt. "Jail" was actually a small room in the basement of a hut. It had very little in the way of security, both for preventing a prisoner's escape and for deterring any potential rescuers. Recognizing the need for a real jail as part of an integrated justice system in Uruzgan, the Dutch PRT worked closely with the provincial judge, Mohammad Jan, to design and build a prison.[9] When the Dutch departed Uruzgan in August 2010, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) assumed responsibility for the construction, which was monitored by the Australian PRT and completed on 20 April 2011. The project was conducted with close cooperation with Afghan leaders. Proper local coordination, security, contracting, quality control, and oversight all yielded an outstanding facility that met the needs of the provincial government. From a project completion perspective, the Australians built a "model prison."[10] From an implementation perspective, however, the prison was not run well, and multiple accusations of prisoner abuse and maltreatment were raised.[11]

Trade and Special Skills Schools

Young Afghans living in Uruzgan were mostly uneducated but were very smart, dedicated, and motivated to succeed. The Australians capitalized on this energy by creating a trade school.[12] Young adults and teenagers were brought into the school during the day and taught trade skills that were necessary to build a business or to be hired as a skilled laborer.[13] The school was located next to the main gate at Multinational Base Tarin Kowt, with easy access in and out of the compound. Australian soldiers taught classes using materials from the base. The classes covered carpentry, masonry, plumbing, electrical wiring, and other critical skills that would lead to immediate employment upon graduation. The graduation rate was high, as was the morale of the students. The pride of their accomplishment and confidence in their skills learned was evident in their beaming smiles at graduation. Graduates were

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[8] *Comprehensive Needs Assessment for Uruzgan Province, Afghanistan: Final Report* (Canberra: Australian Agency for International Development, 2010), 41.

[9] "Current Projects: Tarin Kowt," Provincial Reconstruction Team report, June 2010.

[10] Ahmad Shah Jawad, "Complaints at Afghan 'Model Prison'," Refworld, 12 September 2011.

[11] Max Blenkin, "Australia Halts Transfers to Afghan Jail," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 16 May 2013.

[12] Cpl Nathanael Carberry, USA, "NAC: Trade Training School," DVIDS, 22 July 2011.

[13] "Graduation Ceremony: Trade Training School," Provincial Reconstruction Team Engineers report, 8 May 2011.

Figure 13. Tarin Kowt bazaar, February 2011

Source: courtesy of the author.

awarded bright red toolboxes, which they proudly carried with them to their new jobs.[14] While on patrol with CTU throughout Uruzgan, the author saw many of these red boxes at numerous job sites, which validated the effectiveness of the training.

In a similar vein, Coalition soldiers and civilians took the initiative to create many other programs that improved the prospects for the people of Uruzgan. Classes were taught on numerous subjects, such as community policing, English language skills, medical training, and the explosive hazard reduction.[15] When there was a shortage of teachers in Afghan schools near Coalition bases, interpreters would oftentimes fill those gaps for limited periods of time. There was a thirst for knowledge in Uruzgan that went beyond formal education, and the Coalition tried to capitalize on these opportunities whenever possible.

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[14] "ISAF School Develops Skills among Afghan Youth," United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 4 August 2008.

[15] "Community Policing Workshop," 4th Battalion, 70th Armored Regiment report, 14 April 2011; "Literacy Training for Afghan National Security Forces," Combined Team Uruzgan report, April 2011; "Medcap," Combined Team Uruzgan report, 22 November 2010; Nichols, interview with the author, 11 May 2011; and Nichols, interview with the author, 18 May 2011. The teacher's training institute was a local school that had 107 teachers in training attend daily.

Female Engagement Teams

On 25 September 2010, a CTU female engagement team (FET) conducted a patrol in the town of Khas Uruzgan to work with the Afghan Health and Development Services clinic there.[16] The FET landed at a forward operating base nearby and then patrolled, in full combat gear, approximately a kilometer along dirt roads to the outskirts of town where the clinic compound was located. At the clinic, the FET members spoke to women about the quality of service there and the well-being of local residents. The FET assessed the clinic's capabilities and shortfalls by talking to patients as well as a doctor, two midwives, and staff. Their assessment provided candid input regarding the quality of care and impressions from female patients that could not otherwise be obtained. On this and other related visits, the FET's unique capability enabled CTU to coordinate more effectively with provincial and district government leaders regarding women's health and other issues that would otherwise be unattainable.

One example of this unique capability is highlighted in a report based on Australian Army warrant officer class 1 David Ashley's discussions with Afghan soldiers in the city of Nili. Ashley recalled that the soldiers "built a well and the women broke the well deliberately, because they wanted to go down to the river once a day and gossip. The women obviously had power there and if they are empowered . . . they have a greater say in families and therefore that is where we ought to put the FET.[17]

On a subsequent mission on 10–11 May 2011, another FET team visited the village of Kakrak-e Sharqi in the Tangi Valley. After the Afghan National Army secured the valley, with support from their Australian partners, they were able to reach out to the local Afghans living there. The FET was on the first mission into the valley. The FET visited eight *qualas* (family compounds) and met with a total of 20 Afghan men. Its members spent significant periods of time in each quala, ensuring that strong bonds were established among the Afghan women and setting the scene for future engagement patrols. The FET was accompanied by Coalition medics who were able to improve the effectiveness of its mission with better access to the local women. Working closely with local elders in Deh Rawod and the Tangi Valley helped establish the FET as a trusted component of CTU patrols in the region.[18]

Many women and girls in Afghanistan are treated much like property. Especially in rural areas such as Uruzgan and Daykundi Provinces, they are normally not allowed to talk to or interact with men outside of their families. Many are not allowed to leave their qualas except to shop or on special occasions. The health care made available to them was often restricted not only by availability to their community but also by cultural sensitivities to women seeing people, even doctors and nurses, who were not in their immediate families. Providing assistance and support to Afghan women and girls was impossible for male soldiers in this environment. The only way to engage with this vital section of Afghan society consistently and effectively was to form teams of Coalition women who were willing to go into villages and towns to provide medical and social assistance. FETs were ultimately formed to achieve more comprehensive outreach to local Afghan women.

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[16] Nichols, interview with the author, 10 April 2011; and "Local Clinic Assessment with Female Engagement Team from Tarin Kowt," Combined Team Uruzgan report, 26 September 2010.
[17] Nichols, interview with WO1 David Ashley, ADF, 7 April 2011.
[18] "Combat Team C Female Engagement," Combined Team Uruzgan report, 10–11 May 2011.

Except for the PRT, the units assigned to CTU were not configured to provide FETs. Most of the women assigned to CTU served in supporting roles and typically did not go "outside the wire" of Camp Holland. As the women of CTU performed vital tasks, moving them out of their current jobs would create operational holes in their organizations. Many of the contributing nations to CTU did not want to authorize their women to go outside the wire for security reasons. Creating FETs from CTU's existing resources required close coordination with subordinate units and their national authorities. Risk had to be assumed both by the women in the FETs and their units, which lost their services for up to a week at a time. Simply finding women to volunteer for FETs proved to be challenging as well. Recognizing the importance of outreach to Afghan women, the author determined to overcome these organizational and cultural challenges. FETs were formed, and they helped substantially increase the ability of CTU to engage effectively with Afghan women in Uruzgan.

Leadership Lessons Learned

Successful Projects Were Not Necessarily the Norm

While there were quite a few major successful projects and programs completed to standard in Uruzgan between 2010 and 2011, there were many projects that were not completed to standard or should not have been started in the first place. Building projects ranging from wells to schools to clinics, which had been well-intentioned but poorly executed, dotted the landscape. The reasons for these failures were numerous and are described below. With a few modifications to the way these projects were implemented, the success rate could have been much higher. From a leadership perspective, the most compelling lesson learned was that these projects were oftentimes successful when CTU coordinated closely with the local leaders, used reasonable contracts that withheld profit margins until after the project had been completed to standard, and used frequent quality assurance and quality control standards. Once projects were complete, adequate maintenance and sustainment funding was required. Success in these endeavors was not necessarily guaranteed, as seen with the results of the "model prison," where a well-constructed project was misused by the Afghans after completion.

Too Much Money

With more than $266 million (USD) going toward these projects, plus additional development program funding available, CTU was unable to adequately monitor and supervise the contracts. CTU could not find the locally skilled artisans and tradesmen needed to execute quality projects, so to hire quality specialists, contractors had to look in Kabul, Kandahar, and other large Afghan cities. Contractors were able to find people with the appropriate skills, but the cost was often high due to middlemen who each took a cut of the profits, to the time needed to conduct the search, and to timing of execution. Limiting the funding allocated for projects, especially in rural areas, would have helped focus efforts on the most important projects, such as the jail or the girls' school. From a leadership perspective, the major lesson learned was to limit the amount of money expended in the area of operations to that level which could be successfully implemented. Proper Coalition oversight, direct local leadership involvement, adequate labor capacity, quality assurance, and coordinated project prioritization are all attributes that could have been achieved with more limited fund allocation.

Why Are You Building a School in Taliban Territory?

With dozens of countries, NGOs, international organizations, and Coalition forces all trying to help in a limited area, conflicts often arose regarding which projects to support in what priority. Projects were started in areas that were either insecure or became insecure. The sponsoring organizations asked CTU for security assistance, but CTU was not able to help because the projects did not align with its organizational priorities or capabilities. Over time, CTU began aligning security and development in time and space. Projects were coordinated so that they were in line with improving security and local leader coordination. CTU also altered security expansion plans based on critical development needs. Coordination that went both ways was essential and was well worth the significant effort required.

Why Did We Put This There?

When the author visited a new million-dollar airfield in the city of Nili, which was a USAID project, it struck him as out of place.[19] Nili is known for its amazing almond crop, and the idea was to build an airfield that could help get the almonds out of the middle of the Hindu Kush mountains to market. The concept makes sense, but the place that was selected for a fixed-wing airfield was on top of a mountain. When the author and U.S. Army brigadier general Kenneth R. Dahl visited the site in April 2011, the project director quietly told the two officers that due to the altitude there, cargo planes could not land on the airfield as designed.[20] Building the airfield required huge dirt movement and engineering at an exceptionally high cost. The infrastructure and connections needed to use the airfield did not seem to be part of the planning process. From a Western perspective, the airfield could have made a substantial improvement to the economic conditions in Uruzgan. From an Afghan perspective, it was not certain that the high cost was going to yield the anticipated returns. Western leaders should have pressed their Afghan partners to define their priorities and explain how projects would help them achieve their long- and short-term goals. Asking more questions while narrowing the number and scope of projects would have created a more effective list of projects.

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[19] Sgt Sam Dillon, USA, "Daykundi: A Model for Success in Southern Afghanistan," DVIDS, 19 June 2011.

Processes Not Clearly Understood

Throughout Uruzgan, local contractors had to understand and follow processes and procedures that were established by numerous organizations representing many countries. These standards were described in English but not necessarily in Pashto or Dari. Each organization changed their rules and application processes on a regular basis. For smaller local companies, who oftentimes possessed minimal literacy skills, to understand and follow this complex maze of regulations was difficult at best. Local companies that could execute a project to standard were not able to properly follow the morass of regulatory requirements or track the frequently changing requirements. Larger companies could keep up with the changes or coordinate to get the project completed, but they were usually located far from the worksite, which caused an increased cost due to middlemen. Quality control and oversight issues were difficult to overcome.[21]

Corruption Came in Many Sizes, Shapes, and Forms

Corruption took many forms at all levels. Recognizing more quickly where corruption was occurring would have helped CTU leadership and its partners avoid certain pitfalls in project management. According to a 2011 Congressional Research Service report:

> Another challenge is contracting in an environment that is rife with corruption, defined in this context as the misuse of a position of authority

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[20] LtGen Kenneth R. Dahl, USA (Ret), interview with author, 11 April 2022.

[21] Heidi M. Peters, *Wartime Contracting in Afghanistan: Analysis and Issues for Congress* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2011), 3.

> for personal gain, to the detriment of society and the goals of the mission. Many analysts believe that firms and individuals in Afghanistan are able to operate within the existing U.S. and ISAF [International Security Assistance Force] procurement processes without fear of prosecution due to connections to corrupt power brokers and government officials.[22]

The author witnessed many forms of corruption during his time in Uruzgan. For example, some contracts were given 100 percent of the project payment up front, which led to many projects being started but not completed as contractors disappeared with the money. This was true in the building of the Tarin Kowt police headquarters, which will be discussed in chapter 17. In another example, the provincial chief of police, Afghan National Police brigadier general Shrizad, fired his logistics captain for corruption based on an internal investigation, Australian Special Forces Task Force 66, the 4th Battalion of the U.S. Army's 70th Armor Regiment, and the Australian Mentoring Task Force.[23]

Some projects in Uruzgan were assigned to larger companies in Kabul. These contractors had more capacity, spoke English, and were able to navigate complex and shifting processes. For these companies to fulfill the contracts, they had to subcontract to local companies. Contracts in Uruzgan had several layers of subcontracts. A company in Kabul would subcontract to a company in Kandahar, which would hire a local company in Uruzgan. Each level of the subcontract would extract a high profit. The layers of contracting dramatically increased the overall cost of the contract.

Remote contracts may have been well-intentioned, but with the transportation and security limitations in Uruzgan, project sponsors could not get to the contract sites. As the project sponsors could not properly supervise subcontractors and on-site managers, this created a significant gap in quality assurance and quality control.[24]

A fair price for work in Afghanistan was difficult to determine. The cost to build schools, clinics, roads, and other infrastructure projects was substantially higher when the Coalition was paying than when it was not. During negotiations for projects, the Coalition oftentimes paid far more than what the market would have demanded. By paying in excess of market value for projects, the local markets were disrupted. Prices for other goods and services, including property values, were artificially inflated far beyond what local citizens could afford. According to the Congressional Research Service:

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[22] Peters, *Wartime Contracting in Afghanistan*, 6.
[23] Nichols, interview with the author, 16 May 2011.
[24] Nichols, interview with the author, 16 May 2011.

> Many of the weaknesses of the current government acquisition process can be exacerbated and exploited in a wartime environment, making it more difficult to adhere to best practices. These weaknesses include inadequate acquisition planning, poorly written requirements, and an insufficient number of capable acquisition and contract oversight personnel. For example, in a wartime environment, it is more difficult to research and evaluate companies bidding on a contract and more difficult to conduct oversight of projects built in dangerous locations.[25]

Fair wages provided to local Afghans for labor services became distorted over time. Male teachers made around $90 (USD) a month; female teachers made around $160 (USD) a month.[26] Coalition interpreters could earn up to $1,600 (USD) a month.[27] It was very difficult to entice teachers to work at the local schools. The wages that the Coalition paid Afghan workers to perform support services at military bases was substantially greater than what they could earn in the local community. This wage disparity threw the labor market off-balance at the same time that the Coalition was trying to expand the economy in Afghanistan.

Oftentimes, the Coalition thought that a good idea should be implemented quickly, only to find that it had oversaturated the community. The Dutch had gone all-out to build wells in Chora to provide fresh water to a community in need. Unfortunately, they drilled dozens of wells that were all the same depth, and after a short while the aquifer at that level went dry, leaving the people back where they started. Too much of a good thing without adequate understanding of second- and third-order effects ended up causing more problems than it fixed.

Some community elders in the Chora area approached the Coalition and asked for a dam to improve their crop performance and increase the amount of water available for day-to-day living. Their argument won the day, and the dam was built. A short time later, violence in the area increased. Initial reports and assessments led to a common belief that the Taliban was moving into the area. As the situation worsened, what the Coalition discovered was that the violence was in fact stemming from attacks initiated by villagers living downstream who had not been consulted about the dam. These people now had less water and were fighting back against the villagers living upstream. The Coalition tried to do the right thing and help improve conditions in the area, but by not fully vetting and coordinating the project with all impacted people, the effort ultimately caused more harm than good.

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[25] Peters, *Wartime Contracting in Afghanistan*, summary.

[26] *Comprehensive Needs Assessment for Uruzgan Province, Afghanistan*, 40.

[27] This number is based on an average monthly salary estimate of 71,200 Afghani using a 2011 exchange rate of 48 Afghani to $1 (USD). See "Translator Average Salary in Afghanistan," Salary Explorer, accessed 11 November 2022.

Coalition management turnover made tracking the progress of projects extremely difficult. CTU dealt with three different staff engineers in 12 months. These were some of the best officers with whom the author served, but the scope of $500 million (USD) worth of projects was much greater than what could legitimately be managed on such short rotations. The problem was even worse at higher levels, at which the quantity, cost, remoteness, security, and duration of projects made tracking them extremely difficult. Trying to hand these projects over to new officers, despite being well-trained professionals, was a monumental task. The author attributes many of the "monuments to ineptitude"—unfinished projects that dotted the landscape—to the difficulties in managing projects with a very high staff turnover rate.[28]

CTU worked diligently to provide quality alternative crops that could yield an adequate living for local farmers. Unfortunately, no crop could compete with the poppy in terms of profits. CTU received a young Afghan girl in a hospital with a broken arm. The doctor attempted to give her a pain-killing drug to ease the pain while he set the arm, but the first two children's doses were ineffective. It turned out that the girl had been harvesting tar off of poppy bulbs to obtain the raw sap needed to produce opium. She had leached so much sap into her system through her skin that she had become addicted; standard medicinal doses no longer applied to her. Even with such devastating impacts on their children, local leaders were drawn to the poppy because the profits were far above anything the Coalition could provide.[29]

Finally, metrics used to calculate the impact or effectiveness of projects were often ineffective, measuring the wrong thing, or caused so much bureaucratic inertia that the cost in terms of manpower was much more than anticipated.[30] Coalition leaders would look at the large number of wells in an area and pat themselves on the back for doing great work.[31] They would not realize that in reality the locals still did not have water and the Afghan government had been proven to be untrustworthy and unreliable because it had failed to deliver on a promise. Schools would be counted based on unreliable reports. One report stated that Uruzgan had more than 150 schools. That sounds great at face value, but when one asks how many of those schools had books, teachers, or students, the number was much smaller—and it became even smaller when one considered that the reports were in many cases from unreliable and unverifiable sources.[32] The sheer physical manpower required to gather, confirm, collate, and report all of the data points necessary to confirm these and other metrics was overwhelming. CTU found that tracking outcome rather than output, such as asking how many students were in a class, was more impactful. Focusing on one impactful data point rather than a series of many data points, which could easily get overwhelming, was far more useful in the long run.

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[28] John F. Sopko, *What We Need to Learn: Lessons from Twenty Years of Afghanistan Reconstruction* (Washington, DC: Office of the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, 2021), 53.

[29] Craig Whitlock, "Overwhelmed by Opium: The U.S. War on Drugs in Afghanistan Has Imploded at Nearly Every Turn," *Washington Post*, 9 December 2019.

[30] Anthony Cordesman, "Afghan Metrics: How to Lose a War—and Possibly How to Win One," Center for Strategic and International Studies, 12 January 2010.

[31] Author's notes, book 7, 12 May 2011.

Development programs had a dramatic impact on the well-being of the Afghan people living in Uruzgan. Many projects were completed and met or exceeded expectations. Fighting against the many challenges associated with long distances, security concerns, difficult and changing processes, greed, contracting capacity, building capabilities and skills, and a harsh expansive environment made maintaining a high success rate extremely difficult. Some points that would have helped include:

- Begin with community-driven needs and secure written agreement in terms of the requirements.
- Conduct thorough coordination and cooperation with all impacted leaders.
- Limit the number and scope of projects.
- Enforce high standards of quality control.
- Hire local labor and companies if possible.
- Communicate constantly at all levels.
- Use standard contracting systems.
- Pay for materials on a periodic basis and withhold payment until after a final inspection.
- Keep expectations realistic: under promise and over deliver.
- Keep wages and prices in line with local standards.
- Synchronize security and development activities in time and space.
- Use limited metrics that focus on outcomes rather than outputs.
- Ensure that proper staff handover occurs, especially for larger projects.
- Simplify processes and procedures.
- Consolidate NGO, Coalition, and international organization projects regardless of how painful the process becomes.

Development is the centerpiece of building capacity, increasing quality of life, increasing trust in government, and many other critical factors associated with

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[32] While on patrol in many districts and villages during 10 months, the author visited these schools and found that while a few were functioning, many were not teaching students.

Figure 14. Amb Bernard Philip, Provincial Reconstruction Team, and Col Creighton working together daily

Source: courtesy of the author.

helping build a positive living environment. It is a complex process that is often riddled with known and unknown second- and-third order effects. A leader must continue to make the best decisions possible with the information at hand, build solid and trusted relationships, and maintain a positive attitude despite guaranteed frustration. A coalition environment offers the leader an opportunity to take advantage of diverse opinions, multiple funding sources, and different national resources. Capitalizing on multinational resources while guarding against numerous potential obstacles will yield successful developmental programs.

CHAPTER 11

Safe and Secure Elections

Cooperate across Agencies

What Combined Team Uruzgan (CTU) experienced during the 2010 Afghan parliamentary elections, held on 18 September 2010, demonstrates that physical security, governmental trust, and ethnic politics can put an election in question.[1] The success or failure of new Afghan democratic institutions depended on the way that international military forces and their civilian colleagues coordinated their efforts with one another and, far more importantly, with the government of Afghanistan. The development of close relationships between local authorities and security forces enabled both sides to hold each other accountable and perform their missions with mutual support. These relationships allowed CTU to build trust with its partners and work its way through countless situations that otherwise could have torn them apart.[2]

Accusations of Burning the Koran Leads to Demonstrations

During the week leading up to the elections, Australian soldiers on patrol with their Afghan partners had discovered a cache of weapons, ammunition, uniforms, and written material in the lush agricultural Mirabad Valley just southwest of Chora. The written material, all of it in Arabic or Dari, was given to the Afghan National Army (ANA) for proper processing. The Afghan soldiers proceeded to burn the material, as it was Taliban propaganda. A local villager saw the soldiers burning the documents and reported the activity to local insurgent leaders, who fabricated a story that Coalition soldiers were burning the Koran. This use of disinformation by insurgents in Chora had a dramatic impact on the success of the upcoming elections, as it incited multiple demonstrations and riots throughout Uruzgan Province.[3] The provincial government's ability to communicate truthfully with its people helped counter the disinformation pushed by the insurgents.[4]

Insurgent leaders gathered tribal elders based in Chora and were able to convince them that the Coalition was burning the Koran. Having gained the elders' support, the insurgents then gathered the tribes and, on 16 September, assaulted an outpost called Firebase Mirwais, which served as the headquarters for the area's international security forces and was located within a kilometer of the Chora district center. The forces at the base included about 200 ANA soldiers supported by 60 Australian Army soldiers and a U.S. and Australian Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT). The base consisted of two rings of 15-foot adobe walls with adobe living areas, a small clinic, dining facilities, and 20 military vehicles all located inside the inner compound. The compound sat on the side of a hill just outside of Chora.[5]

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[1] *Afghanistan, Parliamentary Elections, 18 September 2010: Election Support Team Report* (Vienna, Austria: Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, 2010).

[2] Author's notes, book 4, 24 September 2010.

[3] Rod Nordland, "2 Afghans Killed in Protests over Koran," *New York Times*, 16 September 2010.

[4] Author's notes, book 4, 24 September 2010.

Approximately 1,200 Afghan villagers attacked Firebase Mirwais, breaching the outer wall of the complex and entering the compound's outer ring, which was devoted to supplies and other support activities. No Coalition soldiers occupied this area. The crowd broke into a storage container and looted its contents then burned the uniforms found inside. Soldiers at their posts in the towers above the demonstrations observed the inner compound. Soldiers guarding the inner wall watched as an angry mob with black insurgent flags, angry chants, and hostile intent approached the main gate. What happened next was tragic, but it could have been much worse.[6]

Afghan, Australian, and U.S. soldiers monitored the demonstration as it moved toward the compound's main gate. They held their fire and tried to diffuse the situation as the mob moved toward the inner gate. One of these soldiers who was posted in a guard tower spotted an attacker wielding an AK-47 assault rifle. After gaining permission from his sergeant to engage the enemy threatening the inner gate with a weapon, he fired two shots, killing the assailant. Some in the crowd were further incensed and attempted to storm the inner gate. If the gate was breached and the demonstrators entered the compound's inner area, there could have been an enormous loss of life, as the Coalition soldiers would have been forced to defend themselves and prevent the protesters from seizing North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) weapons, equipment, and supplies. Before the gate was stormed, an Australian soldier fired several rounds at the gate, over the heads of the demonstrators, with a .50-caliber machine gun. The crowd saw the sparks fly off the metal gate and heard the deafening roar of the Coalition's most powerful machine gun. They immediately retreated and dispersed.[7]

The demonstrators regrouped outside Firebase Mirwais and headed next for the Chora district central office.[8] The district chief, Mohammad Dawood Khan, was inside the compound, which was guarded by Afghan police. Two or three protesters were killed by the police as they attempted to breach the compound. The crowd finally disbanded and went home soon after the fight at the district compound. This ended the demonstrations against the alleged Koran burning incident for that day. However, the insurgent leaders were able to feed off the unrest among the local populace and regroup for further demonstrations the following day.

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[5] Author's notes, book 4, 24 September 2010.
[6] Author's notes, book 4, 24 September 2010.
[7] Author's notes, book 4, 24 September 2010.
[8] Author's notes, book 4, 15 September 2010.

The Impact of International Events

Though some Taliban members were present in Chora during this time, the preponderance of the demonstrators were local citizens who had been convinced by the insurgents and local leaders that the Coalition was made up of infidels who, with no respect for their religion and beliefs, had burned a Koran. With a population whose female literacy rate was less than .5 percent and whose overall literacy rate was hovering around 5 percent, the local mullahs and Taliban leaders could easily manipulate the views of the people. Many local Afghan citizens likely had a range of grievances toward the Coalition prior to this point, but it was the actions of one irresponsible man that set off a string of anti-NATO and anti-American protests. More than 12,000 kilometers away, Terry Jones, an obscure pastor with a tiny congregation in Gainesville, Florida, had declared that summer that he would burn dozens of copies of the Koran to commemorate the ninth anniversary of the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks against the United States.[9] In Afghanistan, Jones' actions were used as fuel by local insurgent leaders to convince the people that the Coalition was another invading force intent on exploiting the Afghan people and dishonoring Islam. Australian Army warrant officer class 1 David Ashley believed that Jones' actions would "get someone killed" in Afghanistan because his freedom of speech in the United States was unimpeded.[10]

It is hard to estimate just how many people died because of Jones' narrow-minded stunt and the media coverage that followed, but the demonstration in Chora described above came after several others in which Afghans demonstrated against NATO bases over Koran burnings that, after further investigation, were proven to have never happened. Nevertheless, the truth in this case did not matter. The perception among the Afghan people that the Coalition condoned and promoted the burning of the Koran was enough to incite hatred and protest against Coalition forces and cause the deaths of both Coalition soldiers and local civilians.[11]

The Demonstrations Continue

Overnight, CTU heard from informants that demonstrators would gather again the next morning, 17 September, the eve of the national elections, to make the 42-kilometer trip to the provincial governor's compound in the capital of Tarin Kowt. At approximately 0700, CTU intelligence teams detected approximately 500 demonstrators setting off in cars, on bikes, and on foot to make the march. Their approach toward Tarin Kowt offered two potential routes to the governor's compound. Neither Afghan nor CTU leaders knew whether the protesters would break left or right at a fork in the road about three kilometers north of Tarin Kowt's city center as they headed south toward the provincial capital. ANA and Afghan National Police (ANP) forces had deployed blocking forces on both sides of the compound and were preparing blockades to help deter the demonstrators if they approached the compound. CTU followed the demonstrators with drones, but it was through communication with friends in the crowd that CTU leadership was able to determine that the protesters were headed toward the left fork, which led to a bridge over the Teri Rud River, northeast of the governor's compound. With the exact route known, CTU worked with Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) to deploy their reserve ANA and ANP forces to effectively defend against what all parties knew was going to be a violent demonstration centered around the alleged Coalition burning of the Koran.[12]

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[9] "Who Is Terry Jones?: Pastor Behind 'Burn a Koran Day'," ABC News, 7 September 2010; and Ewen MacAskill, Richard Adams, and Kate Connolly, "Pastor Terry Jones Calls off Qur'an Burning," *Guardian*, 10 September 2010.

[10] WO1 David Ashley, ADF, interview with Capt Margaret Nichols, ADF, 20 March 2011.

[11] Nichols, interview with the author, 18 September 2010.

What happened next was inspiring to see. The demonstrators broke left and headed for the bridge, where the provincial chief of police, ANP brigadier general Juma Gul Hemat, was waiting. The chief pulled up in his personal lime-green camouflaged U.S.-made M998 High Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicle (HMMWV), supported by seven green Ford Ranger pickup trucks and approximately 30 Afghan police. He walked forward to meet the demonstration leaders on the bridge, and asked the leaders—who were Barakzai tribal elders, not Taliban—to come with him to see the governor. The leaders agreed, and they all rode together to meet with the acting provincial governor, Khodi Rahim. Rahim was a respected teacher and elder, but he was not a strong leader.[13] After four hours of talks, Rahim was able to convince the demonstration leaders that the Coalition had not burned the Koran and emphasized that the provincial government supported the best interests of the Afghan people. Finally, the acting governor and local elders emerged from the compound with an agreement. The elders returned to the bridge in Brigadier General Hemat's vehicles to tell the crowd that they had met with the acting governor and were convinced that the alleged incident was a fabrication. The remaining demonstrators peacefully returned to Chora to prepare for elections the following day.

The fact that the demonstrators' path to the governor's compound was blocked by the provincial chief of police, who negotiated a peaceful solution, demonstrated the growing positive influence of police in Uruzgan. It proved that local police forces, not NATO or ANA troops, had the ability to diffuse a tense situation that had already seen the deaths of several people. On the final day before the elections, it appeared that at least in Uruzgan, the provincial government had gained the power needed to take the lead in handling a major security event peacefully, while also preparing for other contingencies. This is precisely what the United States and the Coalition had been working toward in Afghanistan: empowering Afghan leaders to take their country back after years of domination by outside forces and Taliban extremists. For the second day in a row, ANSF and Coalition forces had exercised considerable restraint and tactical diplomacy to avert what could easily have become extremely violent situations.

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[12] Author's notes, book 3, 15 September 2010.

[13] The author worked closely with Governor Rahim for 12 months. This assessment is based on those interactions.

Preparing for the Elections

NATO soldiers and the international community, as represented by civilian governments and organizations such as the United Nations (UN), had been working for years to build an Afghan government that would serve its people and endure by maintaining security and resolving conflicts in the service of peace and prosperity. The experiences of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) during the 2009 Afghan presidential election reminded one that solid solutions were not necessarily widespread. CTU leadership understood that for an election to be successful, the local people had to own the election process. In preparation for the 2010 elections, CTU assisted the provincial leadership in Uruzgan with comprehensive planning, detailed rehearsals, coordination with all interested parties, and close monitoring of election execution.[14]

As the 2010 elections approached, CTU understood some of the challenges that were coming. Working in the ISAF central planning offices in Kabul in 2009, the author witnessed the fundamental dilemmas in holding elections in Afghanistan at work. For the 2009 election, the UN provided the Coalition with lists of polling sites, but because coordination with Afghan and Coalition security elements was severely restricted by the Independent Election Commission (IEC) and UN, much of the necessary information was either not available or missing. Some of the 6,167 sites sent to ISAF for coordination and confirmation were villages that were considered "ghost" locations. ISAF attempted to conduct reconnaissance of the polling sites, but the security situation, remoteness of the locations, and coordination of actual site grid coordinates created substantial friction. ISAF and the ANSF rehearsed the actions required for a successful election with Coalition and Afghan leaders, but as much of the discussion was general and not based on factual information, the rehearsal was ineffective. Coordination between the IEC and Coalition forces was not effective because of the IEC's desire to ensure that the military did not influence the results of the elections.[15]

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[14] Author's notes, book 3, 12 September 2010.

In 2010, CTU was responsible for only 79 polling sites in the provinces of Daykundi, Kandahar, and Uruzgan.[16] Planning between the Afghan government, Afghan security forces, and Coalition organizations began as soon as the author took command of CTU, six weeks ahead of the election. Rehearsals were coordinated to prevent problems that the author had seen in Kabul in 2009. For example, medical evacuation plans were rehearsed in much greater detail. All groups involved in the planning process worked hard to ensure that Afghans were more involved in the selection of polling places and to physically validate the locations as actual polls. The security concept that was implemented involved forming three rings around each polling site. The first ring in the immediate vicinity of the polling site would be secured by Afghan police. The second ring around the villages in which the polling sites were located would be secured by the ANA. Coalition forces would form the third ring by providing general support in the form of helicopter support, medical support, transportation augmentation, communications, and combat reinforcement as requested.

Last-Minute Changes

Just as the protests against Koran burning occupied the entire CTU team, three days before the 2010 elections, 15 September, CTU received a call from its higher headquarters, ISAF Regional Command South, with additional requests. CTU was asked to secure the village of Kajran in southern Daykundi Province, some 100 kilometers north of Tarin Kowt; to establish a polling site in the town of Adazi in Khas Uruzgan District, about 80 kilometers northeast of Tarin Kowt; and to establish polling sites in the town of Kalatak in Chora District, about 16 kilometers from Tarin Kowt. The author sensed that these requests from the Afghan government would improve voting opportunities for the area's Pashtuns, the tribe of Afghan president Hamid Karzai and a group more likely to support his party in parliament over other politicians supported by other tribes in the province.[17]

The missions to establish these polling sites were dangerous. On 16 September, Afghan security forces supported by U.S. special operations forces flew in medium cargo helicopters supported by Boeing AH-64 Apache attack helicopters into the district of Kajran in Daykundi Province. Kajran is approximately 40 kilometers north of Forward Operating Base (FOB) Tinsley in the northwest region of

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[15] Alexandria Zavis, "Number of Voting Centers for Afghanistan Presidential Election Will Increase," *Los Angeles Times*, 30 October 2009.

[16] Author's notes, book 4, 16 September 2010.

[17] Nichols, interview with the author, 19 September 2010.

Uruzgan, where CTU and its Afghan partners had been fighting insurgents steadily during the previous year. It is a mountainous region with fertile green valleys spread between jagged brown peaks. CTU had never been to Kajran and had very little intelligence other than the general knowledge that it was known as a drug production area that was generally secure. One concern was a report provided by the provincial chief of police, Brigadier General Juma Gul Hemat, that indicated a letter from the leader of the Taliban, Mullah Omar, to his insurgents encouraging them to disrupt and oppose the elections in any way possible, to include infiltration of the ANSF, the use of fake identification, the delivery of "night letters" to threaten local residents, and attacks on isolated locations.[18]

U.S. Special Forces Task Force 34 linked up with Afghan election officials and a brand-new platoon of approximately 40 Afghan soldiers who had arrived the first week of September after completing basic training in Kabul. These Afghan soldiers had not been trained by their Australian mentors and had just completed a problematic movement from Kabul during which they had lost two soldiers due to vehicle accidents and internal attacks. The decision to use these Afghan soldiers was difficult and not taken lightly. When the team landed in a field outside the village of Kajran, an insurgent who had entered the ANA and deployed as one of the new Afghan soldiers immediately shot and tragically killed U.S. Air Force senior airman Daniel R. Sanchez and wounded others.[19] A loyal Afghan soldier, in turn, turned his belt-fed machine gun on the insurgent and killed him. The elections in Kajran proceeded as planned at the cost of a U.S. airman and threats to the success of the partnership between Coalition and Afghan forces.[20]

Meanwhile, the ANA and ANP were directed to secure five previously unannounced polling sites near the town of Kalatak in Chora District. This town was located 16 kilometers from Tarin Kowt in a large valley that extended due east toward the outer district of Khas Uruzgan. The decision to support this request was difficult because it required Afghan and Coalition forces to traverse ground that on 24 August had seen a major battle during which approximately seven insurgents had been killed. CTU leadership was confident that Kalatak was secure, but it was not as confident that polling sights and voting personnel could be secured. This region represented a Pashtun enclave in Chora, a district of primarily Barakzai citizens. As mentioned previously, CTU leadership was suspicious that the Afghan government was keen to secure these primarily Pashtun polling sites in an attempt to negate the Barakzai votes in Chora.

CTU's final request from its higher headquarters was to open an election polling site in Adazi in the northeast region of Uruzgan, some 30 kilometers northeast of the brigade's closest FOB, Anaconda. CTU had not operated in the region since participating in a battle with insurgents due north of FOB Anaconda the previous spring. Though information regarding the enemy situation in Adazi was limited, CTU leadership assessed that if aircraft could land in the town, conditions could be set for the Afghans to administer their elections. CTU sent another team composed of U.S special operations forces, Afghan election officials, ANSF troops, and a team in Boeing CH-47 Chinook transport helicopters. Locals crowded onto the small landing zone in what was then still relatively unknown territory for Coalition forces, preventing the helicopters from landing. The helicopter pilots decided to return to Tarin Kowt rather than push the issue and potentially wound or kill Afghan civilians while attempting to land.[21]

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[18] Nichols, interview with the author, 18 September 2022.
[19] "SRA Daniel Sanchez," Air Force Special Tactics, accessed 14 September 2023.
[20] Nichols, interview with the author, 18 September 2022.

Natural and Infrastructure Obstacles

With many of the polling sites located in the jagged mountains of the southern Hindu Kush, CTU could not verify that all were secured by Afghan forces. Polling material was secured centrally until the last minute to maintain security and control; however, distribution to the many isolated mountain villages presented a significant challenge. Plans for distribution had to be made weeks in advance. Most materials were delivered via a complex air support plan designed to get the materials, security forces, and election officials to their designated areas in time to execute a legitimate election. Without the close coordination and support of U.S. aviation assets, the elections would have been impossible, as the roads required to support the elections were not open in September 2010 as they are today.

Leadership Lessons Learned

There Was Improvement but Still Much to Be Done

There were several important improvements made between the 2009 and 2010 Afghan elections. The size of the ANSF had doubled; the Afghan government had control of the major population centers and primary road systems throughout the country; and the government had been able to interact with its people and begin to build trust between provincial governments and outlying districts, villages, and tribal elders. Improvements in development, systems, and personnel helped further the influence of the Afghan national and provincial governments. Thanks to a government information campaign broadcast on the radio and numerous shuras (meetings of tribal elders) in every district and many villages, a bridge between the people and their government began to be rebuilt. Nevertheless, numerous obstacles to a successful election remained. Some of these obstacles, and the leadership lessons that were learned from them, follow here.

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[21] CTU received a request for an additional polling station in a remote village. The team drafted a plan to execute the mission based on the facts provided.

Push for Cooperation at All Levels

The Coalition military forces and the UN had disagreements during the planning for the 2010 Afghan elections. Polling site locations, numbers, and priorities changed weekly, which made planning for security, delivery of election materials, election execution, and vote retrieval difficult. The requirement to search all voters, including women, created a constant challenge, and Afghan men would not allow the women in their families to work at polling sites because they either were afraid of harassment at the sites or did not support the right to vote for women. Election officials were typically discouraged from coordinating with Coalition forces, though CTU was fortunate in that the Uruzgan Province election official recognized the importance of close coordination. Threats against IEC representatives' lives from Afghan warlords and insurgents combined with IEC orders not to associate with the Coalition forces who were willing to protect officials put the representatives in a precarious situation.[22] An election official without the courage and integrity displayed by the election official in Uruzgan could easily have derailed the elections.

Focus on What Can Be Controlled at the Local Level

The Afghan central government under President Hamid Karzai had disagreements with local governments as to which polling stations to open. The central government seemed to be more concerned with ensuring Popalzai domination, while the provincial government and election officials were more interested in the fair distribution of polling sites. The difficulty in identifying where to place polling sites was compounded by the fact that the last census in Afghanistan was conducted in 1974, so the information required to accurately identify population centers was highly inaccurate. From a more cynical perspective, the lack of accurate census data also made it easier to manipulate voting tallies at the national level. During the 2010 elections, fewer polling sites were threatened by this, but those that were seemed targeted to discredit the votes from specific tribal areas.

The Taliban worked to undermine the legitimacy of an emerging democracy in Afghanistan. They stirred up violence in Chora, infiltrated the ANA in Kajran, and threatened local election officials. The 2010 elections represented the eighth national election in nine years in Afghanistan and were being held to elect parliamentarians, not the president, so voter apathy was also a considerable concern. Voters remembered well the violence and corruption associated with the 2009 election, so many were hesitant to risk their lives to support yet another election.[23]

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[22] Author's notes, book 3, 31 August 2010. Security of Independent Election Commission personnel was a concern.

Impacts of the Provincial Government Earning Trust

The strength of the Uruzgan provincial government's handling of the violent protests that followed the alleged Koran in September 2010 increased the level of trust between the government and its people. The government would need to continue to earn that trust. The success of the elections in Uruzgan also highlights the value of strong partnerships between the government and security forces. The detailed planning, rehearsals, and preparation for the elections that were coordinated between local officials and international election and security elements ensured effective and efficient execution despite many tribal, administrative, and insurgent-led obstacles.[24]

Granted, the provincial government was not perfect. Its chief of police was corrupt, but he could be a partner when he saw that it was in his interest. The Coalition was not perfect, either, but as soldiers learned the local politics in Uruzgan, they could work more effectively to empower Afghans and improve systems. The combined team of Afghan and Coalition civilians and soldiers successfully opened 71 of the 77 polling sites located in the remote districts of Daykundi, Uruzgan, and Kandahar. The people of these districts were free to exercise their right to vote. The election results were forwarded to the Afghan central government in Kabul. What happened to those votes once they reached the central government was outside of CTU's control.

Building Solid Teams

A leader should build teams with leaders who possess courage and integrity. These people will be able to perform within one's vision and intent without substantial oversight and direction. The relationships developed and maintained with local officials, subordinates, superiors, and other leaders are essential to high performance in crisis and tense situations. The trust between leaders at all levels helps overcome challenges that can impede operations.

Time spent executing planning, rehearsing, and preparing for major events is crucial to generating successful outcomes. Rehearsals at all levels that include all systems must be evaluated with exacting attention to detail and include potential challenges that could occur unexpectedly. As a leader, having the courage to enforce high standards of performance will lead to quality results.

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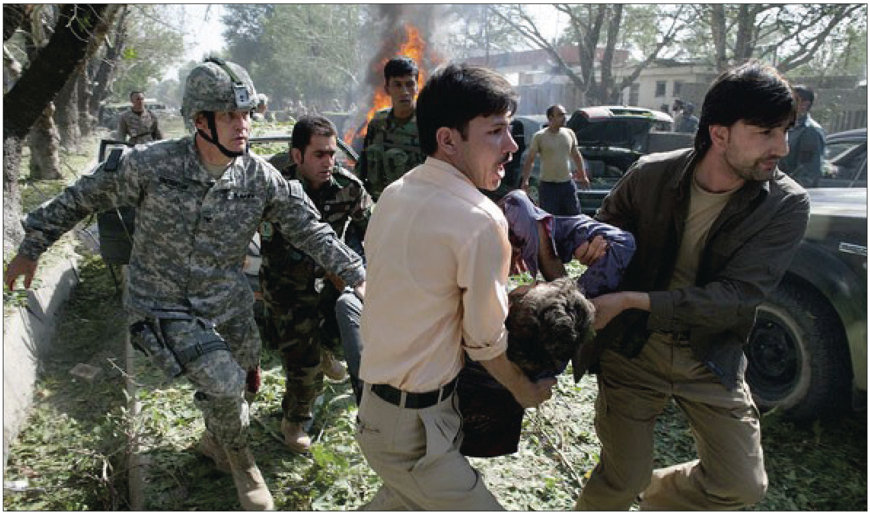
[23] "Observing Afghanistan's 2010 Wolesi Jirga Elections," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 21 October 2010.
[24] Author's notes, books 3 and 4 annotate numerous briefings, rehearsals, and updates focused on the 2010 election.

Figure 15. Col Creighton helps respond to an IED attack on ISAF headquarters prior to the 2009 Afghan presidential election



Source: Carlotta Hall and Sangar Rahimi, "Bomb Kills 7 Near NATO's Afghan Headquarters," *New York Times*, 15 August 2009.

Know the System and Rules

Understanding the Afghan election system from top to bottom helped CTU anticipate where problems were likely to occur. Knowing the local leaders and listening to their advice, guidance, and concerns helped develop a plan that accounted for potential problems with the election. Comprehension of national election rules established CTU and its Coalition partners as authorities on what a "right" election was supposed to look like. Being the authority on the standard helped mitigate challenges about how to plan, prepare, and execute the 2010 elections.

CHAPTER 12

The Battle of Derapet

How to Fight a Battle in a Coalition Environment

The Battle of Derapet, which took place in Afghanistan's Tangi Valley on 24 August 2010, was a success from a CTU perspective of Combined Team Uruzgan (CTU). The brigade set out to secure the valley, ridding it of Taliban influence. The Australian forces that executed the attack, led by Australian Army lieutenant James Fanning, proved that they were not to be deterred in eliminating enemy forces and freeing oppressed Afghan citizens in Uruzgan Province.[1] It was a tough fight, but as the new force at Forward Operating Base (FOB) Ana Joy, a small outpost established by the French less than three miles from Derapet, the Australians demonstrated that they could integrate fires and maneuver and that they were not going to accept the status quo.

When the Australians assumed control of the operating area from the French, CTU began what turned out to be a 3- to 4-month-long process of liberating the Tangi Valley.[2] From an Australian perspective, the results of the operation were circumspect. There were questions surrounding the circumstances of Australian Army lance corporal Jared McKinney's death during the battle.[3] There was a growing belief that the diggers (Australian soldiers) who had met with the Taliban were not properly supported by combined arms assets.[4] There were suggestions in the Parliament of Australia and the media that tanks should be delivered to and employed in Uruzgan to support infantry operations. During the discussion surrounding the Battle of Derapet, the Australian leader of the opposition, Anthony J. Abbott, arranged to visit CTU in Tarin Kowt.[5]

Background to the Battle

By August 2010, growth and development had begun to take hold in the western and central regions of Uruzgan. However, this progress was inhibited by a pocket of Taliban-held territory in the Tangi Valley. The valley, which measures approximately 3 kilometers wide by 10 kilometers long, is located between the provincial capital of Tarin Kowt and the district of Deh Rawood. The village of Derapet is located at the western mouth of the Tangi Valley, between the valley and Deh Rawood. While much of the rest of Uruzgan had been secured by Coalition forces, the Taliban maintained a stronghold in the province's center that enabled attacks on roads, prevented commerce from moving east to west, and impeded the Afghan government's actions to improve the living standards for all citizens. Moreover, CTU received reports of child abuse, rape, negative madrasas, and other violent actions again civilians in the valley. The brigade had to take action if it was to help the Afghans achieve their goals.

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[1] David Ellery, Dylan Welch and Tony Wright, "Where Heroes Were Made: Inside the Battle of Derapet," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1 November 2012.

[2] Spc Edward Garibay, USA, "Aussies Mentoring Enables Afghans Ability to Fight," Army.mil, 31 March 2011.

[3] "Lance Corporal Jared McKinney," Australian Army, accessed 11 November 2022.

[4] Dan Oakes, "More Troops, Tanks in New Opposition Afghan Campaign," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 30 September 2010.

[5] Capt Margaret Nichols, ADF, interview with the author, 9 October 2010.

The Tangi Valley is a lush region nestled into rugged mountains that rise more than 200 meters above the valley floor. The total population of the valley was estimated to be about 1,000, with the people congregated in several small villages. The villagers there grew typical crops of grapes, watermelon, almonds, and subsistence crops while also raising goats and sheep to supplement their diet. It is traditionally a quiet area that runs east to west in a horseshoe shape with jagged peaks on the southern, northern, and eastern walls. The west end of the horseshoe opens up toward the district capital of Deh Rawod, about 10 kilometers from the mouth of the valley. The road leading from Deh Rawod to the valley was the only lifeline for the villagers to use to bring crops to market and buy essential supplies. This lifeline had been cut off by the Taliban.[6]

FOB Ana Joy, located at the entrance to the valley, had served to halt Taliban expansion toward Deh Rawood but was not capable of eliminating the Taliban presence or stopping the abuses taking place in the valley. The French occupied FOB Ana Joy with approximately 30 soldiers from an infantry company of some 150 soldiers located at FOB Hadrian in Deh Rawood. Although well-trained and motivated to act, these soldiers could not leave the FOB to pursue the Taliban due to their national caveats, which could have prevented the violence and subjugation occurring within view. As the commander of CTU, the author could not motivate them to be more aggressive. The French soldiers did everything within their power to stop Taliban expansion in the area and prevent Taliban influence from growing outside the valley, to include prevention of ambushes and attacks on the main roads to Deh Rawood.

The Battle of Derapet

An Australian battle group replaced the French forces at FOB Ana Joy in August 2010. These Australian soldiers possessed the same high level of training, professionalism, and motivation as their French predecessors but were not constrained by national caveats. Under the operational command of U.S. Army lieutenant colonel Douglas A. Sims II, who commanded the U.S. Army's 1st Squadron, 2d Cavalry Regiment, the Australians planned for the liberation of the Tangi Valley. They conducted reconnaissance patrols, engaged with local leaders, worked with CTU Singaporean and national intelligence assets, and observed local movement patterns for several weeks. Australian Army major Christopher Wallace, the battle group commander, determined that a morning attack conducted by approximately 20 Australian and 20 Afghan soldiers supported by two Australian ASLAV-25 armored reconnaissance vehicles, Boeing AH-64 Apache attack helicopters, M777 155-millimeter howitzers, 120-millimeter mortars, and close air support would be successful.[7]

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[6] Author's map, 14 December 2021.

Early on the morning of 24 August, the Australian and Afghan troops infiltrated through the valley's lush terrain and irrigation ditches toward the Taliban positions. As they crept toward the enemy's fighting positions and confirmed intelligence reports noting approximately 100 Taliban fighters, they moved into six separate fighting positions. At approximately 0913, the Coalition troops were engaged by direct fire from about 100 meters to their front. For more than three hours, the Australian and Afghan soldiers fought a larger Taliban element, resulting in at least 30 Taliban killed in action. The firing intensified when an Australian soldier was wounded and lay in the open. The injured soldier's team leader, Corporal Daniel A. Keighran, took the initiative to stand up and divert enemy fire from the rescue operation on four separate occasions. Corporal Keighran was subsequently awarded the Victoria Cross for Australia for his acts of courage and gallantry.[8] With the remaining Taliban elements dispersing into the mountains surrounding the valley and low on ammunition, the Australian and Afghan forces withdrew via their Bushmaster Protected Mobility Vehicle quick-reaction force into FOB Ana Joy. During the battle, Australian Army lance corporal Jared McKinney was tragically killed in action, which offered a stark reminder of the risks taken to rescue the Afghan people from Taliban abuse.

The Taliban still maintained control of the Tangi Valley following the battle, but they now knew that they faced a formidable force that would leave FOB Ana Joy to seek them out and destroy them. As a result of the operation, CTU cleared the valley, paving the way for government control, improvements in education and healthcare, and increased development activities in the area.

The Australian Response

The Australian leader of the opposition, Anthony Abbott, arrived in Tarin Kowt shortly after the Battle of Derapet and the death of Lance Corporal McKinney. The federal opposition in Australia was calling on the government to deploy tanks to Uruzgan to ensure that there was sufficient firepower available during Australian operations. Abbot supported his “shadow” minister for defence, Senator David A. Johnston, who advocated for more tanks.[9] There was an impression that if the Australian soldiers in the Tangi Valley were able to employ tanks during the battle, they would have avoided casualties. From the view of the CTU leadership, tanks would not be effective in the counterinsurgency environment the Coalition was facing in Uruzgan. Soldiers on the ground needed to meet with local people daily, build relationships, and engage with tribal and government leaders. These critical tasks were best handled by infantry soldiers on foot patrol in districts and villages. For combat operations, CTU possessed numerous armored wheeled vehicles that provided enough protection against the small arms fire received by enemy fighters. The armored vehicles in the valley during the Battle of Derapet were successful in providing the protection and fire support required during the engagement. Abbott disagreed, arguing that the armored protection provided by tanks was essential to protecting Australian forces engaged in combat operations.

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[7] John Cantwell, "Beyond the Call," *Australian*, 7 December 2012.

[8] Claire Hunter, "I Probably Should Have Been Killed Doing What I Was Doing," Australian War Memorial, 24 August 2020.

The primary goal of CTU was to support the Afghan government’s efforts to build a stable environment in Uruzgan and to defeat the insurgency in CTU’s area of operations. As such, there was no need for additional armored vehicles, nor was it helpful for Coalition government leaders to be distracted from the priority requirements needed on the ground. The CTU leadership designed Abbott’s visit to Uruzgan so that he could experience firsthand the challenges and opportunities that lay in front of the brigade. The opposition leader was able to meet Australian leaders and soldiers. He met with the Australian Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) to review vital projects and discuss opportunities to improve conditions in Uruzgan. The PRT pulled together and made convincing arguments regarding CTU priorities. He also met with several Afghan leaders to demonstrate that all components were harmonized in their assessments and views.[10]

The requirement for tanks in Uruzgan was the one critical issue that the CTU leadership did not address directly during the first part of Abbott’s visit. At the end of his visit, Abbot was escorted to the Tarin Kowt firing range, where CTU had lined up all weapons available to the diggers during the Battle of Derapet. The group began with individual weapons, including pistols, rifles, machine guns, and soldier-fired rockets. They then offered Abbott the opportunity to fire the mounted weapons systems in the ASLAV-25 and Bushmaster vehicles that had been present at Derapet. He readily accepted, firing many rounds at the targets that had been set up. At Derapet, M777 howitzers, AH-64 Apache attack helicopters, and French Dassault Mirage fighter aircraft had also been available. CTU called in fire from all of these weapon systems following Abbott's engagement with the vehicle systems. By the time the helicopters and aircraft had delivered their ordinance on the range, Abbott agreed that the firepower available during the fight at Derapet had been adequate for the mission.

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[9] Paul Foley, Australian ambassador to Afghanistan (2009–12), interview with author, 3 September 2022. In the Australian government, the political party that is not in power typically appoints individuals to serve as “shadow” ministers to the party in power.

[10] Nichols, interview with the author, 9 October 2010.

Controlling the Narrative

Anthony Abbott's visit to Uruzgan concluded with a discussion between the author, Australian Army major general John P. Cantwell, and Abbott behind the firing line. The group reviewed CTU priorities and discussed requirements for continued progress in Uruzgan. They emphasized that all components within CTU and the Afghan government communicated regularly and that views were synchronized. The discussion then turned to the combat power needed to support Australian diggers in combat. The combat power demonstration and hands-on target engagement at the Tarin Kowt firing range had made an impression on Abbott. His comment regarding the casualties at Derapet was that "sometimes shit just happens."[11]

Anthony Abbott's comment was accurate in the context of the discussion. Unfortunately, a reporter had recorded the discussion with a parabolic microphone, and Abbott's comment was taken completely out of context in reports and articles that followed. They portrayed the discussion as callous and uncaring, yet that description could not have been further from the truth. The Australian government and its ministers genuinely desired to provide the best support possible to their soldiers, to maximize their support to Afghans, and to help build a stable society in Uruzgan. In the short term, the issue of tanks was dropped from the conversation. In the long term, Mr. Abbott's comments that were recorded underhandedly continued to reverberate in the Australian press.

Leadership Lessons Learned

Coalition Team Building

Maintaining constant coordination and communication between leaders from all participating organizations helps ensure that all parties have a common vision of the mission and its requirements. By talking independently to many different agencies who had very similar views of the situation and mission, the CTU leadership was able to convey a unified message whose impact was amplified because it was shared by all. Building a team that can trust each other and coalesce around a common direction helped CTU overcome many obstacles and avoid the deployment of tanks to Uruzgan.

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[11] " 'Shit Happens': Abbott Grilled over Digger Remark," Australian Broadcasting Corporation News, 8 February 2011.

Impact of National Opinion

As a leader, the author recognized that Anthony Abbott's visit to Uruzgan represented a significant opportunity and a political threat to the ability of CTU to perform its mission. At the tactical and operational level, the impact of the Battle of Derapet was positive. From a strategic and international level, however, it represented a potential risk to CTU's mission focus. The author and his staff took the political threat aspect of this visit seriously. They planned, prepared, and rehearsed extensively to turn a threat into an opportunity. By focusing energy, time, and effort on the Australian opposition leader's visit, CTU was able to do exactly that: turn a threat into an opportunity. Abbott became a prime advocate of CTU, which helped CTU achieve its goals from a strategic and international perspective.

Mission Orders

Prior to the Battle of Derapet, the author gave Lieutenant Colonel Sims a very general mission: eliminate the Taliban presence in the Tangi Valley. Sims was able to translate that mission into action with the arrival of a partnered force that could help the Afghans plan, prepare, and execute to standard. He took the mission and, with his subordinates, developed a plan that successfully achieved it. As a higher-level commander, the author made sure that Sims had the appropriate resources and support, but the author did not have to concern himself with the intricate details of the operation. By building trust with Sims and assigning missions that he could execute independently, the author freed himself to focus on other priorities. Specifically, while the battle in the Tangi Valley battle was happening, the author was able to prepare for the 2010 Afghan parliamentary elections and provide support to another major battle raging in the Mirabad Valley. Staff coordination and rehearsals ensured that artillery, helicopter, and aviation support were readily available to Coalition troops in contact. A U.S. operation was executed by partnered Australian and Afghan forces on the ground who were supported by French and U.S. aircraft. Executing multinational combat operations effectively helped solidify CTU's ability to work as a team quickly. Building the trust needed to properly delegate is the only way senior leaders can succeed.

Proper Delegation

For a leader, delegation can be a double-edged sword. On the one hand, if a leader delegates a mission to a subordinate and the mission is successful, the leader can continue to move forward and has multiplied their effectiveness. On the other hand, if the mission fails, the leader will have to regroup, losing forward momentum. Delegating in a coalition environment introduces new challenges based on different cultural norms and expectations. Some cultures expect the leader to make all of the decisions and are hesitant to act on general orders based on mission and intent. Proper delegation takes into account the complexity of the mission, trust in the subordinate's abilities, and knowledge of their strengths, weaknesses, and limits. Some subordinates will require more supervision than others. The amount of supervision required is also impacted by the scope and complexity of the mission. A leader must know their subordinates well enough to make accurate assessments. These assessments will help minimize micromanagement and maximize the autonomy that most junior leaders crave. Regardless of how much a leader delegates, they cannot delegate responsibility for mission success or failure, as the responsibility for success or failure belongs to the leader alone. Motivating subordinates to maximize their potential and succeed with minimal supervision is the art and joy of leadership.

Maintain Focus and Perspective

Focusing on the critical fight is often difficult, as there are often many conflicting priorities demanding a leader's attention. Leaders must decide what is most important and where their presence will provide the most value. On 24 August 2010, Australian Army warrant officers class 1 Brett Brown, regimental sergeant major of 6th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment, and David Galloway, command sergeant major of CTU, were getting things ready for a hangar service for Australian Army privates Grant W. Kirby and Thomas J. Dale, who had been killed in a roadside improvised explosive device (IED) attack on their Bushmaster vehicle on 20 August.[12] As all hands in Tarin Kowt began congregating for the service at the Apache hangar, Lance Corporal McKinley, who had been killed in the Battle of Derapet, was flown in via medevac (medical evacuation) to the Role 2 hospital next door. He looked quite peaceful as he was unloaded at the hospital, with just a small entry wound through his upper arm that had sadly bypassed his body armor and gone straight through to his heart. Galloway said that he "instantly knew it wasn't good when [he] saw one of the nurses crying as she was helping unload him . . . onto the gurney."[13] Brown and Galloway attended to both issues simultaneously, with Galloway moving to assist with McKinley and Galloway moving to usher the onlook-

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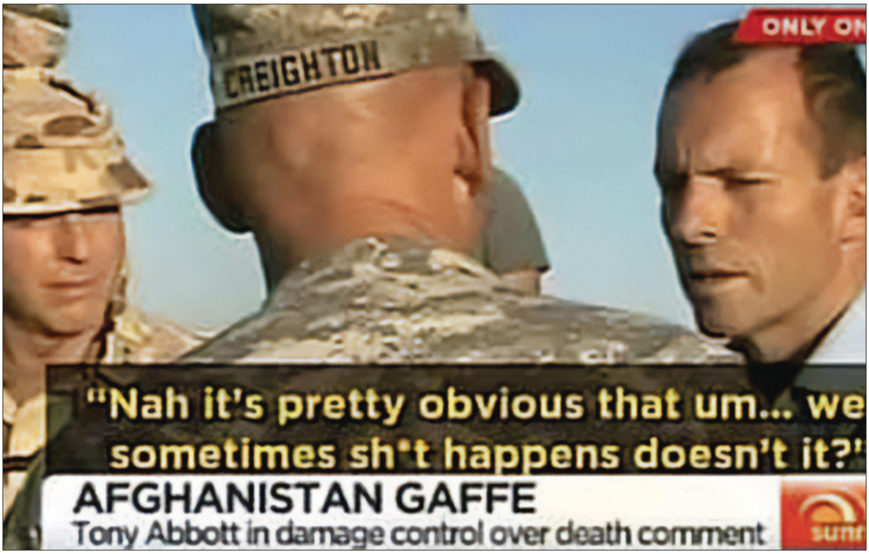
[12] WO1 David Galloway, ADF, interview with author, 7 April 2022; and "Two Australian Soldiers Killed in Afghanistan," Australian Broadcasting Corporation News, 20 August 2010.

[13] WO1 David Galloway, ADF, interview with the author, 7 April 2022.

Figure 16. Col Creighton with Australian leader of the opposition Anthony J. Abbott


CREIGHTON
ONLY ON
"Nah it's pretty obvious that um... we
sometimes sh*t happens doesn't it?"
AFGHANISTAN GAFFE
Tony Abbott in damage control over death comment
sun

Source: Thomas Hunter, "Reporter Denies Abbott 'Ambush' Amid Anger over Digger Remark," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 9 February 2011.

ers back down to the hangar for the commencement of Dale and Kirby's service. Following the service, Brown was immediately involved in preparing a resupply of ammunition to go forward in support of the escalating battle at Derapet. Galloway, meanwhile, was quite busy as well:

> I was at the Operational Command Center, Provincial (OCCP) making sure that the assets needed to fight the battle were being provided in a timely manner. I was able to compartmentalize and sort many conflicting pieces of information in to remain calmly focused on providing support to the priority fight in Derapet. Ordinarily I would have been at the ramp ceremony and the hospital, but my focus had to be on the current fight. Understanding the priorities and recognizing where you will have the most impact as a leader helps to prioritize assets and make sound decisions in a crisis.[14]

All of this occurred on Galloway's birthday, which was another priority that was postponed until a more appropriate time.

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[14] WO1 David Galloway, ADF, interview with the author, 7 April 2022.

CHAPTER 13

Freedom in the Mirabad Valley

Set Priorities and Achieve Goals

One of the first comments that Khodi Rahim, the acting governor of Uruzgan Province, made to the author after taking command of Combined Team Uruzgan (CTU) centered around the need to improve the provincial road network, which would improve commerce, communication, and the ability to help the people of Khas Uruzgan District. The route to Khas Uruzgan had been blocked by an active Taliban network, and from Rahim's perspective the district center was secure and ready for increased development initiatives.[1] Based on the governor's priorities, CTU subsequently integrated its combat power and capability to facilitate an expansion of roads and government control in the Mirabad Valley. This led to substantial increases in commerce and development. The Mirabad Valley provides a vital link for the transportation of people and goods between Tarin Kowt and Khas Uruzgan. Traffic between the provincial capital and this outlying district was almost nonexistent, so the governor made securing and opening the main artery out of Tarin Kowt a high priority.

Eliminating "Brick"

Australian intelligence activities helped target Taliban elements in the Mirabad Valley. An insurgent leader with the code name "Brick" and his group of Taliban fighters were the main source of instability in the valley.[2] Brick was assessed to spend much of his time in Pakistan, returning only to collect taxes, disrupt Coalition activity, and maintain control of citizens in the area.[3] CTU and Australian Special Forces Task Force 66 tracked Brick's movements closely using various intelligence means, creating a comprehensive understanding of his patterns and habits. The Task Force 66 worked with Afghan National Police (ANP) colonel Matiullah Khan's force, Kandak Amniante Uruzgan (KAU), to successfully target Taliban leaders who were instigating unrest.[4]

Task Force 66 was able to use national Australian intelligence assets to analyze the Mirabad Valley. Working with the KAU, the special forces made several attempts to eliminate Brick during August and September 2010. Their persistence finally paid off as they were able to piece together Brick's movement plan and anticipate his next location in the valley. In that fall of 2010, Task Force 66 executed a nighttime helicopter raid that yielded Brick's demise.

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[1] Author's notes, book 3, 17 August 2010.

[2] Author's notes, book 3, 19 August 2010.

[3] CTU's intelligence agencies were able to track the location of Brick via various national sources. The author received this information either at scheduled weekly briefings or immediately if it was urgent. These briefings are indicated on the author's calendar, but notes were not taken. Author's notes, book 3, 2 September 2010. Australian leaders at FOB Wali confirmed Brick's security disruption in the Mirabad Valley.

[4] Maj Ian Langford, ADF, "Australian Special Forces in Afghanistan: Supporting Australia in the 'Long War'," *Australian Army Journal* 7, no. 1 (2010): 21.

Expanding into the Mirabad Valley

With Brick's Taliban network no longer threatening the Mirabad Valley, CTU developed and implemented plans to expand provincial governance, development, and security throughout the valley. Using its Singaporean intelligence team to analyze the situation and environment, CTU created a plan that involved pushing the Afghan National Army (ANA) bases north and east toward Khas Uruzgan, to be followed by increasing ANP presence in areas vacated by the ANA. The expansion of these ANA and ANP security zones allowed Afghan government agencies, CTU's Australian Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT), and international organizations to push governance and development capacity into areas previously controlled by the Taliban.

The Singaporeans created two three-inch-thick, three-ring binders full of information on each village in the Mirabad Valley.[5] They analyzed the economics, leadership, customs, geography, strengths, weaknesses, and vulnerabilities of each village in extreme detail. This information fed directly into the ANA and Australian mentors' plan to expand their presence in the valley by building new forward operating bases (FOBs). The Afghan police and their U.S. mentors from the U.S. Army's 2d Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment, and 4th Battalion, 70th Armor Regiment, were subsequently able to expand police presence in areas that the ANA forces left as they moved to bases further from Tarin Kowt.

The Taliban had free reign in this area and were not interested in giving up control without a fight. During the same time that CTU was fighting in the Tangi Valley, the security situation in the Mirabad Valley was contested by local Taliban forces. CTU integrated French Dassault Mirage fighter aircraft, U.S. M777 155-millimeter howitzers, Australian and U.S. Army engineers, and Afghan, Australian, and U.S. Army infantry and cavalry elements to eliminate Taliban influence prior to and during base expansion efforts. After two days of fighting, Taliban influence faded, and CTU was able to open the road with Afghan soldiers providing overwatch.[6] Eventually, the ANP took over the base and the ANA moved farther north and east to newly established outposts. This pattern was replicated several times during the

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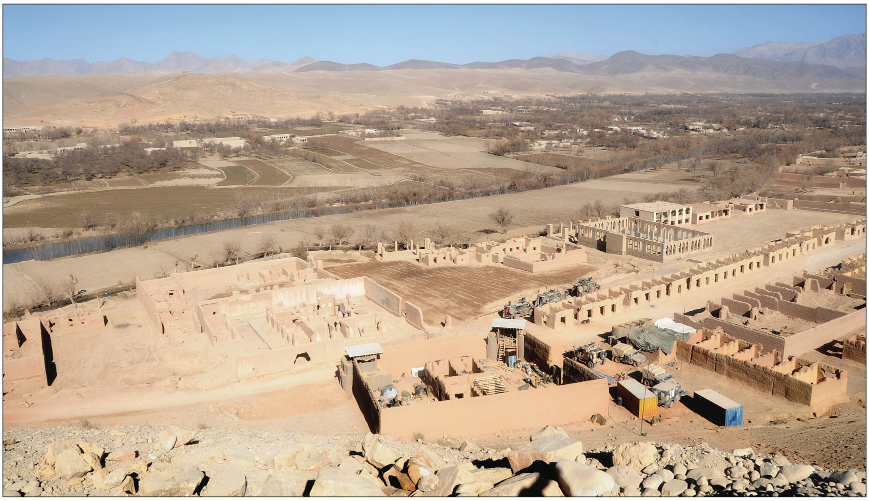
[5] CTU's Singaporean intelligence cell created background intelligence books for each operation. The author reviewed these books and was thoroughly impressed with their attention to detail and in-depth research.

[6] Capt Margaret Nichols, ADF, interview with the author, 5 April 2011. The opportunity to return to normalcy in the Mirabad Valley was enabled by the fighting that secured the area enough to build FOB Hamid.

Figure 17. Bazaar before demolition



Source: courtesy of the author.

following months.[7] As the security belt expanded, schools, clinics, and bazaars were built, reestablished, or modified based on tribal leader input that was provided to the provincial governor in a series of *shuras* (meetings of tribal elders) that were held along the route. The construction of new bases enabled ANA and ANP forces to establish a more permanent government presence in the Mirabad Valley, as demonstrated with the establishment of FOB Hamid in April 2011.[8]

Tearing Down the Bazaar

There had been an ancient *bazaar* (outdoor market) in the middle of the Mirabad Valley that was destroyed by the Taliban. CTU planned and budgeted to rebuild the bazaar once security in the area was sufficient. During a shura held by the provincial governor, however, the local elders were emphatic that they did not want the bazaar to be rebuilt. Instead, they requested that CTU level the bazaar so that the ruins could not be used by the Taliban in the future. The governor was satisfied that all tribal interests were aligned with this request and subsequently asked CTU to use bulldozers to flatten the bazaar. When CTU began the operation, numerous local Afghan people came out to express their encouragement, which served to confirm the governor's initial decision. This event solidified the importance of relationship building and in-depth local coordination prior to executing what the Coalition initially thought was a good idea.[9]

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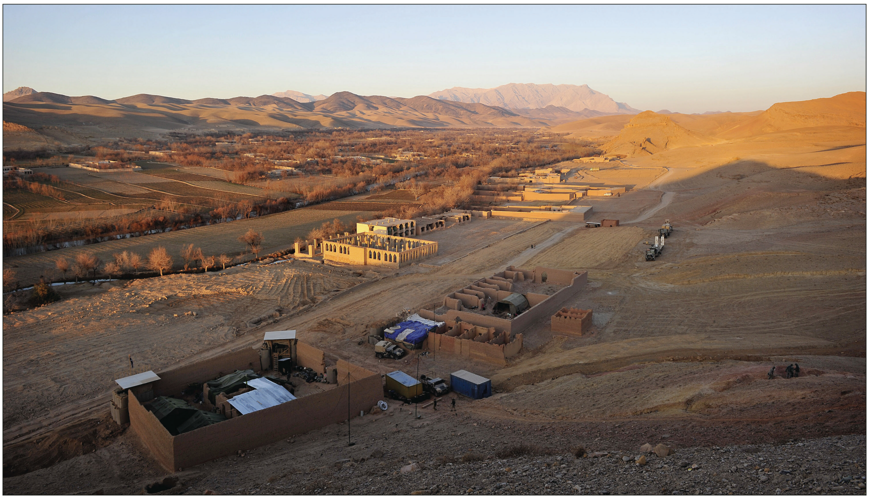
[7] Author's maps from January 2011 and June 2011 illustrate the expansion of bases in the Mirabad Valley.

[8] Nichols, interview with the author, 5 April 2011; and Nichols, interview with the author, 15 May 2011.

[9] Nichols, interview with the author, 5 April 2011.

Figure 18. Bazaar immediately following demolition



Source: courtesy of the author.

Growing Afghan National Army Capacity

The ANA had established a new *kandak* (battalion) in Kabul in early spring 2011. This kandak was created from a cohort of new Afghan enlistees who entered basic training as a team under a cadre of hand-selected officers and sergeants. The kandak moved from Kabul through Kandahar and on to Uruzgan as a unit. The move stressed their training and initiative from the very beginning, as vehicle crashes, ambushes, and disciplinary challenges plagued them the whole way. After arrival at Tarin Kowt, ANA brigadier general Mohammed Zafar Khan determined that the new kandak would move quickly to the field to further expand security in the Mirabad Valley.[10]

Brigadier General Zafar directed that the ANA move to build and establish FOB Heydara, which was to be located 8 kilometers west of the farthest secure point. This decision was made with CTU knowledge and support but not at the suggestion of CTU. It represented a big step forward for the 4th Brigade of the ANA's 205th "Hero" Corps. Though CTU provided some technical expertise, materials, and transportation support, this action was made almost exclusively by the ANA. When the author went to see how the Afghan soldiers were doing, he was impressed that they had taken the initiative and applied the many lessons learned during the previous nine months.[11] During a discussion at the build site, the author's interpreter, Dawood Alakozi, translated a conversation between the author, the kandak commander, and local elders.[12] The kandak commander was

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[10] Author's map, June 2011.
[11] Nichols, interview with the author, 15 May 2011.
[12] Dawood Alakozi, interview with author, 5 March 2022.

Pashtu and spoke Pashto, while the elders were Barakzai and spoke Dari. Consequently, a simple discussion took quite a while, with three languages being integrated simultaneously. The gist of the conversation was that the elders were extremely appreciative of the expansion of security and subsequent development access. The elders recognized the opportunities that had been enabled by the provincial governor's commitment to expanding areas of control throughout Uruzgan.

Valley Secure—Road Open

By May 2011, the road through the Mirabad Valley was free to travel, and commerce had begun to grow. The author recalls an elderly Afghan man on a red motorcycle traveling toward him on the road with his grandson in his lap.[13] He stopped his bike and walked toward the author with a glow in his eyes. He reached out both hands and with a huge toothy smile shook the author's hands and thanked him for enabling him to drive down a road that was now clear, which was something his grandson had never been able to do. The integration of military capability enabled the clearing, occupation, and security of the Mirabad Valley. Follow-on police and development activities had a dramatic impact on the economy and well-being of the local citizens. With effective integration of Afghan forces with Coalition capabilities, Taliban influence was eliminated in the area.

Leadership Lessons Learned

Motivating People and Organizations

CTU recognized that the Taliban controlled the Mirabad Valley and that the Afghan security forces had not been motivated to devise a plan to secure the route to Khas Uruzgan. As a leader, the author was able to define the vision of a secured valley with open lines of communication to Khas Uruzgan. The Australians could not plan for the expansion on their own because their charter was to mentor—not lead—the ANA. The Australian Mentoring Task Force (MTF) convinced Brigadier General Khan that it was his duty to secure the route. As a Soviet-trained career army officer, Khan had a highly developed sense of duty to which they appealed. Once he agreed with the vision, the Australians stepped up to coach and mentor the Afghans through the planning, preparation, and execution of the operation. Once the concept was developed, the MTF was motivated to help the ANA succeed.

The ANP, on the other hand, were content to stay where they were. Initially, ANP brigadier general Juma Gul Hemat resisted any thought of expansion beyond where his forces were already deployed. Hemat saw the ANP as a secondary partner to the ANA outside of the city centers, and so he was constantly looking for ways to elevate the police above the army.[14] Using competitive instincts, CTU leadership was able to convince Hemat that when the ANA expanded in the valley, the ANP would lose face by staying where they were and not expanding into areas vacated by the ANA. The result of motivating the ANA and ANP to expand in tandem was that they began to work together. The two Afghan generals historically mistrusted each other on an organizational and personal level. Motivating them to work together required a comprehensive understanding of what motivated them on a personal level. Achieving security in the Mirabad Valley was the critical component for expanding the lines of communication in Uruzgan.

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[13] Nichols, interview with the author, 5 April 2011.

Coordination with Local Leaders

Understanding the priorities of the local residents in Uruzgan was a constant effort. As the Coalition expanded into the Mirabad Valley, CTU facilitated numerous shuras with the provincial governor and tribal elders. Issues that could have derailed CTU's efforts were brought up, discussed, and resolved wherever possible. Oftentimes, even if an issue was not resolved, the fact that the governor listened to the locals helped convince the tribal elders to support the expansion. In one case, the governor was asked to resolve a land dispute that had not been resolved in hundreds of years. The fact that he listened and allowed both parties to address grievances enabled progress. Many issues that were brought up were incorporated directly into the expansion planning efforts. The act of coordinating directly with the tribal leaders on a frequent basis helped ensure that the Coalition's expansion plans met their needs while also building trust between the provincial government and the people of the Mirabad Valley.

Prioritization

Prioritizing the operation in the Mirabad Valley ensured that the leadership, manpower, and logistical capacity needed to successfully execute the mission existed. Securing the valley was critical to opening lines of communication to the outlying district of Khas Uruzgan, reducing Taliban influence just outside of Tarin Kowt and along Route Bear (the road to Kandahar), protecting the local people in the valley; and building trust in government throughout the province. Comparing the importance of securing the valley and the potential rewards of having a secure zone outside Tarin Kowt with the risk of not securing the valley and being unable to push government control out to Khas Uruzgan helped prioritize the resources necessary for expansion. If the ANA had not secured the valley, the Taliban would have

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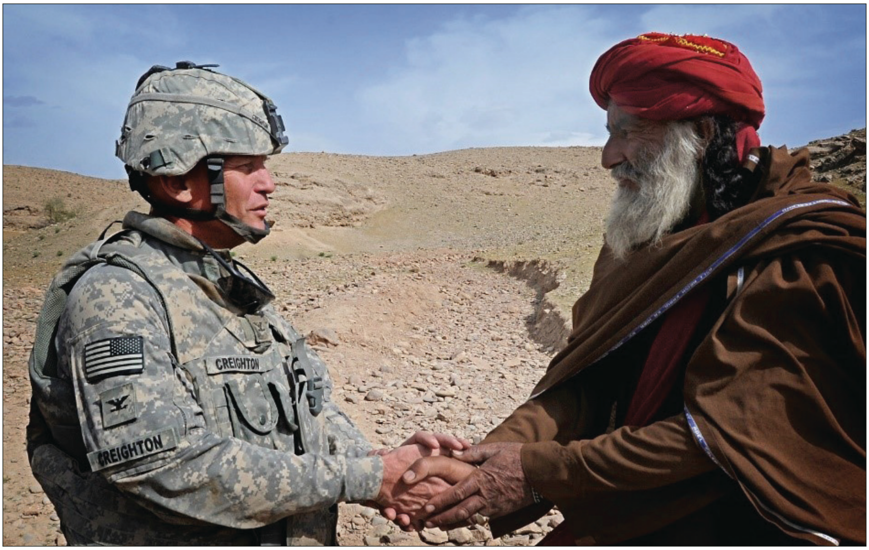
[14] The author met with both the ANP and ANA commanders several times each week. The dynamic of these interactions yielded insights into relative respect given both organizations by the people. The ANP was seen as more corrupt, while the ANA was more trusted. The ANP leadership resented this perception and worked to improve the relationship.

Figure 19. Afghan elder thanks Col Creighton for opening the Mirabad Valley



Source: courtesy of the author.

continued to threaten the Afghan government's legitimacy because it could not secure its own backyard. The security of CTU would have been compromised, as the valley terminated at the CTU fence. Provincial lines of communication and CTU supplies would have been threatened along Route Bear. The risks were substantial and the potential gains significant. By prioritizing the Mirabad Valley in the Afghan government and CTU's plans, the Coalition committed to allocating the resources necessary to achieve CTU's goals. The resources followed the priorities. Limiting prioritized plans to what can reasonably be supported prevents overcommitment.

CHAPTER 14

Liberation in Gizab

Capitalize on Opportunities

Gizab is a picturesque district located about 270 kilometers north of Kandahar in the middle of the Hindu Kush mountain range. It is approximately 116 kilometers north of Tarin Kowt, and although it is officially part of Daykundi Province, its tribal elders recognize Uruzgan as their provincial leadership.[1] To reach Gizab, Afghan citizens have to travel along a 610-meter pass that winds through irrigated crops and alongside blue rivers that are at the bottom of the jagged cliffs that rise up from the valley floors. The district is located in the middle of an isolated high mountain valley that provides the land and resources necessary to sustain the community there. Gizab is at least a one-day drive from either Tarin Kowt or Daykundi's provincial capital of Nili. The district's unique location, far from any large town or military base, made it a prime target for Taliban rule.

The Taliban was in full control of Gizab from 2007 through early 2010. Reports of severe Taliban governance, food shortages, and savage oppression of the people of Gizab were consistent with many of the nearby districts. The Taliban rule created an abysmal environment for the locals there. The district's *bazaar* (outdoor market) had very limited food, virtually zero goods, and not nearly enough capacity to support a population of approximately 5,000 people. Schools had been closed. Women were repressed. Citizens were, for all intents and purposes, confined to their homes. The classic indicators of Taliban rule were all in place in Gizab.[2]

The Uprising of April 2010

The "hero of Gizab," district police chief Lalay, once described to the author the events leading up to the overthrow of the Taliban in Gizab in April 2010. The Taliban had been ruthless in collecting taxes from the citizens of the district. Taliban teams were sent to each *quala* (family home) to collect, and if people were not able to pay, beatings—or worse—were administered. As the Afghan government was not able to intervene to help their people due to the remoteness of the district, Lalay coordinated with U.S special operations forces and garnered local support for a potential uprising. In mid-April, the Afghan government provided Lalay with $24,000 (USD) to compensate local families whose members had been killed by Taliban improvised explosive devices (IEDs). The local Taliban leader ordered Lalay to turn over the money, as he considered it to be *haram*, meaning illegal under Sharia law. Lalay's brother and father were subsequently seized by the Taliban. Using these kidnappings as a spark, Lalay contacted the U.S. special forces with whom he had been coordinating and gathered 300 Afghan police officers and local citizens to turn on the Taliban. Australian and U.S. special operations forces combined to assist the Gizab fighters in an intense fight against the Taliban. This ad hoc team was able to defeat the Taliban, and they began to rebuild their community.[3]

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[1] Author's map, 14 December 2010.
[2] Rajiv Chandrasekaran, "How Gizab's Good Guys Ran the Taliban out of Town," *Seattle (WA) Times*, 22 June 2010.

CTU Arrives in Gizab

After the uprising, a unit from U.S. Special Forces Task Force 34 was established in Gizab to help Chief Lalay and local leaders reestablish Afghan government control of the district and rebuild the local economy. The author, as commander of Combined Team Uruzgan (CTU), visited Gizab five months later on 22 September 2010.[4] As the author flew into the district with his team in two Sikorsky UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters, as many as 1,500 local men, women, and children flocked to the landing zone, and it required several attempts to make sure that the people were safely away from the actual touchdown point before the helicopters landed. When the acting provincial governor of Uruzgan, Khodi Rahim, stepped out of the helicopter with his provincial chief of police, Afghan National Police (ANP) brigadier general Juma Gul Hemat, and the national defense security commander, Afghan National Army brigadier general Zakaria, they were welcomed like rock stars. The crowd surged forward to greet them warmly. The provincial leadership had not been to Gizab in several years, before the Taliban had seized control. The people of Gizab had expectations of a better life to be delivered by the Afghan government and were excited to hear from their government and express their concerns.[5]

The provincial leadership team walked with the district leadership through the town to the district center, where a *shura* (meeting of tribal elders) was to be held. They proceeded through streets lined with empty shops and stands with no food present. The people followed their leaders in a large, noisy crowd like the wake of a large motorboat. The atmosphere was extremely positive and welcoming, with children playing in the streets and smiles all around.

The Gizab District Shura

The Gizab District shura was conducted by Governor Rahim, who spoke to a group of several hundred tribal and district leaders seeking Afghan government help in light of their victory over the Taliban. Their primary concerns were representative of the concerns in other districts, to include the need to open up trade with the rest of Uruzgan and Daykundi provinces to fill the empty stalls in the district bazaar, a reassurance of continued security support, improved medical capacity, and the need for more teachers and school supplies. The governor was joined at the podium by his fellow provincial leaders, who affirmed their support for Gizab. These provincial leaders were in a difficult position because Gizab had technically been designated as a district of Daykundi, not Uruzgan; but since Gizab was historically one of Uruzgan's districts, its leaders naturally deferred to Governor Rahim and his team. In true Afghan fashion, the local leaders did not get overly concerned with what was written or decreed—they simply looked to who could offer the best support at the time.[6]

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[3] Chandrasekaran, "How Gizab's Good Guys Ran the Taliban out of Town"; and Martine van Bijlert, *Transition in Uruzgan: The Fights that Don't Get Mentioned* (Kabul: Afghanistan Analysts Network, 2013).

[4] Author's calendar, September 2010.

[5] Nichols, interview with the author, 26 September 2010.

During this visit, the provincial leadership had the opportunity to tour the district clinic and local school. The clinic was in excellent condition by Afghan standards, as it had been recently constructed and offered excellent potential. Unfortunately, it represented a broken promise in that it was lacking doctors, staff, equipment, and medicine. The U.S. special forces team on the ground was able to help critical cases among the Gizab locals using their own assets, but it was not until the governor saw the problem that the provincial leadership was able to understand how critical these needs were. The school offered some of the same challenges, as it was a reasonable structure but without enough teachers, books, supplies, or desks. CTU was able to remedy some of these shortages quickly; Task Force 34 sent desks to the school the next day. Unfortunately, most of the other challenges took much longer to fix.[7]

The lasting impressions of this detailed firsthand visit to Gizab was vital to understanding the scope of the challenges ahead and to working to help the local Afghans improve the situation there. During the flight back to Tarin Kowt, the daunting nature of sustaining the gains earned by Chief Lalay's bold overthrow of the Taliban became clear. The provincial and CTU leadership teams boarded the two UH-60 helicopters for the 116-kilometer return trip south in UH-60s supported by a team of Boeing AH-64 Apache attack helicopters. The helicopters rose to fly through a narrow pass in the barren mountains as the sun set. With darkness settling, the helicopters descended down through the valleys leading to Gizab. In the twilight, the author could just make out the narrow dirt road that had been carved into the valley walls over centuries. Each family had the responsibility of carving the road into the largely granite hillside in their sector. These families were responsible for maintaining and improving the road. With only hand tools available and questionable security, the primitive roads had begun to deteriorate rapidly. As darkness set in, the helicopters flew the rest of the trip in pitch black, the road having disappeared into the night.

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[6] Nichols, interview with the author, 26 September 2010.

[7] *Review of School and Health Clinic Buildings Completed under the Schools and Clinics Construction and Refurbishment Program*, Report no. 5-306-10-002-O (Manila, Philippines: Office of the Inspector General, USAID, 2010).

First Steps to Recovery

Based on the security challenges encountered during the 2009 Afghan presidential election and reports from the Gizab leadership, CTU knew that the biggest challenge to sustaining the gains made by Chief Lalay and his followers was the tenuous nature of the "roads" leading to Gizab. Reports obtained by CTU's intelligence specialists indicated that approximately one to two "jingle trucks" made the arduous trip from Tarin Kowt through Chora to Gizab on any given day.[8] Task Force 34 had the responsibility for developing Afghan Local Police (ALP) capabilities outside of towns and district centers in Uruzgan. The ALP program was intended to expand local police capability while improving the reach and positive influence of the Afghan government.[9] Making improvements to the road between Chora and Gizab a priority for the program was controversial, for if the areas where the ALP officers operated were not chosen well or not supervised appropriately by local elders, the officers could revert to a "warlord" status, which was counter to their intended purpose.

In this case, U.S. Army lieutenant colonel Fleming Sullivan, commander of Task Force 34, was an expert at clearing areas and then establishing local control through effective ALP forces supported by small special forces teams of three to eight soldiers. Sullivan worked with local Afghan leaders from both Gizab and Uruzgan; the ANA's 2d Kandak, 4th Brigade, 205th "Hero" Corps; and tribal elders along the route to clear and hold the road linking the two population centers. The road was opened after several significant fights with Taliban fighters in and around the town of Kush Kadir, which was located approximately 30 kilometers north of Chora on the road to Gizab. Task Force 34 helped the local Afghan forces gain control of the villages along the route as well as maintain security of the road itself. In many cases, the author assessed that the local Taliban recognized that the Afghan government supported by Coalition forces was serious and simply went home. Task Force 34 established ALP units supported by small special forces teams along the route. These forces were professional and effective because they were selected by local elders and held accountable by both Coalition forces and tribal leadership.

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[8] The term *jingle truck* refers to military slang by American troops serving in Afghanistan, although it may date back to the British colonial period. It refers to the sound that the trucks make from the mass of chains and pendants hanging from the bumpers.

[9] "Update on the Afghan Local Police: Making Sure They Are Armed, Trained, Paid and Exist," ReliefWeb, 5 July 2017.

Steps Forward and Backward

The now-secure route to Gizab offered hope and opportunity to the people who had risked everything to overthrow the Taliban. Families made improvements to the road in their sectors. The new provincial governor, Mohammad Omar Shirzad, visited several villages along the route to assess the situation, reinforce the Afghan government's commitment to continued improvement, and determine the truth regarding several incidents reported in the area. On 17 May 2011, CTU leadership accompanied Governor Shirzad and his team on a visit to the town of Kalach. The group flew to the closest landing zone in the town of Ginanna, along the route from Chora to Gizab.[10]

The Taliban attacked Chief Lalay and hung two of his men in February 2011. In retaliation, Lalay burned the towns of Kalach and Ginanna. CTU knew of the attack, but the National Directorate of Security (NDS) report had been completely inaccurate. The NDS report claimed that a couple of homes had been burned by Lalay when, in fact, more than 30 were destroyed, as counted when the group walked through the town. The tension in these towns intensified because the provincial leadership was perceived to have condoned the attack by the Gizab district chief of police.[11]

Three months later, in May 2011, CTU leadership walked into the center of the town and held an informal shura under a large oak tree. The animosity stemming from Lalay's attack seemed to have subsided due to promises of assistance and cash payments from the governor to the locals for the goods lost in the fire (though not for the shops). The local leaders were grateful for the security that had resulted from the Afghan government and Coalition's work but were concerned that support was not coming fast enough. Key concerns centered around books and supplies for the local school. The principal then had three to five teachers available and believed that with the proper supplies the school could support 150–200 children full time.

There was also an intense discussion regarding rebuilding the bazaar. CTU assumed that the bazaar, which had been destroyed by the fire, would be rebuilt. The leaders, however, were not keen to rebuild it where it had been, as they had been paying excessive rent to the owner of the land. A high monthly cost combined with the fact that the bazaar was 5 kilometers off of the main road made the current location less than optimal. Based on this face-to-face meeting with the local leaders, the provincial leadership agreed that the bazaar should be moved to the main road. In the end, the towns of Kalach and Ginanna were moving forward despite challenges and several sharp clashes with both the Taliban and Chief Lalay's police during the previous six months. This progress reflected directly on the ability of Gizab to recover, as the district represented the security improvements made by the Afghan government and the Coalition along the main road leading to the Gizab valley.[12]

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[10] Nichols, interview with the author, 24 May 2011.
[11] Nichols, interview with the author, 24 May 2011.

Continuing on the Road to Recovery

The CTU leadership made one final trip to Gizab on 27–28 May 2011.[13] This was probably the author's most memorable two days as commander of CTU. The visit centered around the Afghan minister of rural reconstruction and development, who had secured funding to build a new bridge across the Helmand River that split Gizab in two.[14] The existing bridge had just been repaired by the U.S. special forces team, but it was in decrypt condition. The bridge had originally been built by stringing steel cables between two cliffs on either side of the river, about 140 meters apart and approximately 3 kilometers north of the town center. It had passed its prime by several decades. Only one vehicle was allowed on the two-meter-wide bridge at a time. Each vehicle had to be led on foot so that the driver could avoid the large potholes between the boards that were haphazardly laid between longer boards affixed to the suspension cables. People crossing the bridge were in danger of falling through these holes; they could look down the nine-meter gap to the rapids below. The Afghan plan for the visit was for Governor Shirzad and the minister to meet with the Gizab district leaders, visit the potential bridge site, and gather insights regarding the requirements of the people living in Gizab.

On 27 May, the Afghan and CTU leadership teams flew to Gizab after a meeting in Kush Khadir.[15] They landed on the north side of the Helmand River at the Task Force 34 team quala. The governor was met by Chief Lalay and other elders from Gizab, who immediately whisked him away over the bridge to the Gizab city center, where he would conduct an opening shura and spend the night. This was not in the initial plan, but the CTU leadership followed along and attended what turned out to be a very informal shura. As the governor had time to spend with the leaders, they discussed many pressing issues, such as who was authorized to cut down which trees and how to resolve historical land ownership issues. The fact that local leaders were able to discuss these issues with the governor relieved much of the stress that they were feeling due to the lack of government control and support during the previous several years. After the shura, the CTU leadership returned to the Task Force 34 quala and had the privilege of spending the night with the special forces team to get caught up on planning and concerns both for the following day and the long term. The governor and his team stayed in the district chief's quala, which was symbolically important.

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[12] Nichols, interview with the author, 24 May 2011.
[13] Nichols, interview with the author, 30 May 2011.
[14] James Creighton and Ettore Marchesoni, *Afghanistan Reconnected: Businesses Take Action to Unlock Trade in the Region* (New York: EastWest Institute, 2014).
[15] Nichols, interview with the author, 30 May 2011.

On the morning of 28 May, the CTU leadership crossed the bridge for a third time, en route to meet the governor and greet the minister who was intent on notifying the people of Gizab about a new bridge and other development projects. As it turned out, the minister arrived on time by Afghan standards but four-and-half hours late by North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) standards. He was consequently forced to cut his visit drastically, so the provincial leadership team did not have time to conduct the shura as projected. The arrival of a minister from Kabul to the remote district of Gizab was for many locals a once-in-a-lifetime event. The promise of the bridge over the Helmand River allowed the people to see that they would capitalize on the sacrifices they had made more than a year earlier. The minister arrived at 1330 and was supposed to leave the district center at 1500; however, aviation assets delayed his departure to 2030 hours and changed the location to the Task Force 34 quala. This change meant that CTU had to take the minister, who was not used to rural and remote operations, across the very bridge he had just promised to replace.[16]

Expect the Unexpected

The CTU team did not know that while the shura was being conducted in Gizab, a jingle truck overladen with steel beams, concrete slabs, and tiles had entered the east end of the bridge. The bridge could not take the weight of the overloaded truck and gave way under the rear axle about three meters from the end of the bridge. The bridge was now impassable and structurally damaged beyond any potential repair. With the delay in the minister's aviation assets, there was time to examine the new bridge site and inspect the damage to the old bridge. The CTU team climbed into the back of six Ford Ranger pickup trucks and proceeded in a convoy down to the river. When they arrived at the site of the old bridge, they found that the truck had fallen halfway through the bridge. The south side's suspension cable was severely damaged, yet the driver was on the bridge under his truck trying to free the rear wheel as he dangled 30 feet above the river. It was clear that the bridge was going to be out of commission for several months and that the minister's selection of that bridge to repair was very much on target.[17]

The CTU leadership team still had to reach the other side of the river to meet

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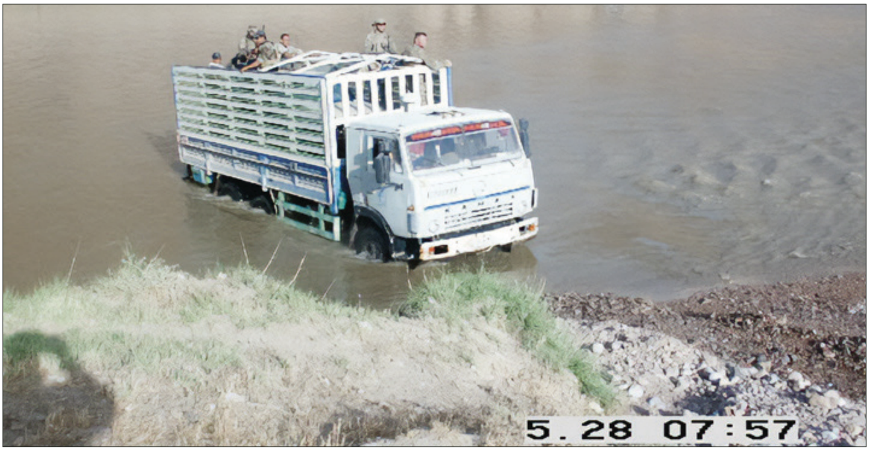
[16] Nichols, interview with the author, 30 May 2011.
[17] Nichols, interview with the author, 30 May 2011.

Figure 20. Helmand River crossing in Gizab using jingle trucks



Source: courtesy of the author.

the minister's aircraft, whose crews, for some unknown reason, would not move to a landing zone on the near side of the river. With the bridge out and the river at a spring high water mark, the challenge and risks were significant. The CTU adjutant, Australian Army captain Jacob Kleinman, found and hired two jingle trucks to ferry the entire party across the river at a submerged fording location. The CTU team built loading ramps out of a raised bank and drove one Ranger at a time onto the jingle trucks. The minister by now had been in one place for more than 15 minutes, which violated his force protection protocol, and he was not too sure that the jingle truck plan was the safest way of getting to the landing zone. He was getting a bit antsy to move but very hesitant to get into the jingle truck. Once the CTU team convinced him that this was the only option, he and his vehicle were quickly loaded onto the jingle truck, which proceeded into the water. As the axles and the fenders submerged, water sprayed out from under the hood due to the water hitting the cooling fan, and the minister's eyes got wider and wider. Once on the other side, the CTU team built an offload ramp out of dirt and then ferried the whole party across the river.

This operation was conducted in reaction to events on the ground with senior government officials present, using at least three different languages, and under stressful conditions. To say that it was a bit chaotic would be an understatement. During the after-action review, Captain Kleinman noted that if it was "my mission rehearsal exercise and they gave me that problem, I would tell the directing staff they were crazy and totally unrealistic. That nothing like that could ever happen." But it did, and the CTU team got everyone back to Tarin Kowt safely.[18]

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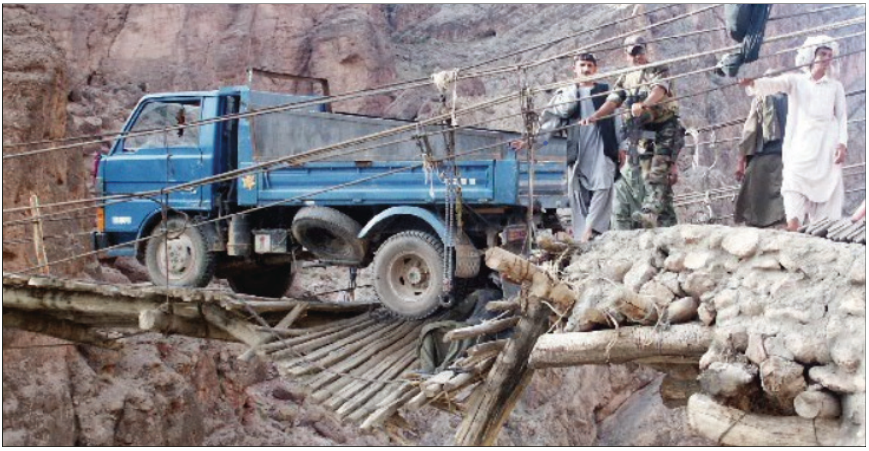
[18] Nichols, interview with the author, 30 May 2011.

Figure 21. Too much weight for the bridge over the Helmand River in Gizab



Source: courtesy of the author.

Reflections

On the return trip to Tarin Kowt, the CTU team flew in pitch darkness over the same pass and down the same valley they had in September 2010. Eight months later, the author reflected that the Gizab bazaar was now full of goods. The shuras that had been conducted covered many topics, but they did not center around food shortages, critical health issues, or school supply issues. The Afghan leaders discussed who can cut trees down next to the road, which is a pretty good problem to talk about. As the aircraft crested the pass and descended into Tarin Kowt, the author noticed that in the pitch black of a moonless night, the sides of the hills along the roads were dotted with dozens of lights. Families had purchased generators and solar light kits and brought them home along the road that the Coalition had helped secure and rebuild. Things were beginning to look different in Gizab.[19]

Leadership Lessons Learned

Capitalize on Opportunities

Chief Layla's bold actions that liberated Gizab from Taliban control presented the Coalition with an opportunity to create a safe district in southern Daykundi. Leaders must recognize opportunities and possess the courage to act decisively. CTU was able to meet with leaders in Gizab and determine what resources were needed to capitalize on the emerging security. Ground lines of communication were cleared and teams were sent to Gizab to assist in opening businesses and achieving development priorities. Leaders must recognize when an opportunity presents itself and focus their energy, time, and resources appropriately to maximize the potential gains.

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[19] Bradley Campbell, "Afghan Success Stories Aren't Quite What They Seem to Be," *World*, 28 October 2014. Unfortunately, soon after Uruzgan and Gizab were turned over to the Afghans in December 2013, the Taliban regained control of Gizab.

Persistence Pays Off

The challenges in Gizab seemed almost overwhelming at times. The road infrastructure needed to open up commerce to the surrounding region had to be repaired and totally rebuilt in areas. Even with the road fixed, the Taliban maintained control of some sections of the road, which limited traffic and endangered travelers. The remote nature of Gizab made development opportunities difficult. Competing tribal and political interests, which occasionally led to non-Taliban violence, complicated efforts to provide continuous security both in Gizab and in the surrounding area. Any one of these obstacles could have resulted in the CTU concluding that helping Gizab was too difficult or not worth the effort.

On the contrary, CTU doubled down on its commitment to capitalize on the success of Chief Lalay’s victory over the Taliban. Gizab was a symbol of what could be achieved with a concerted effort. The people of Gizab had earned CTU’s maximum effort. Given its commitment to helping Gizab maximize its potential, CTU focused on how to help the district grow and develop. Despite numerous setbacks, the CTU staff continued to modify courses of action. Persistent effort and determination to achieve the most possible improvement in Gizab helped maintain focus on the larger objectives.

Maintain a Positive Attitude

Maintaining a positive attitude helped both the CTU and Afghan provincial leadership achieve many of their goals in Gizab. During the CTU leadership’s last visit to Gizab, when the bridge across the Helmand River was ruined and the Afghan minister’s visit was delayed and changed dramatically, the plan that had been developed was quickly thrown off course. After any setback, a leader must focus on how to fix the problem, first by determining what had caused the problem and then deciding what has to change to be successful. A leader should not try to affix blame or punish those responsible. Rather, they should build their team up and make them an integral part of the solution. Sustaining a positive outlook and building teamwork to solve difficult problems kept CTU focused on finding solutions that day in Gizab. A positive attitude is infectious and will spread not only within a leader’s organization but also to other organizations one works with. A leader should go out of their way to project a positive attitude and must not tolerate a poor attitude.

CHAPTER 15

Building Education Capabilities

Question "Facts" and Information

In August 2010, the education level for citizens of Uruzgan Province was approximately 5 percent. According to Australian Ministry of Foreign Affairs estimates, the education level for men and boys was 8 percent and for women and girls a paltry 0.3 percent.[1] The province's schools had been closed and destroyed by the Taliban. Exacerbating the problem were cultural and religious beliefs that did not value education for girls.[2] Afghan children were excited to learn and go to school. Whereas, in World War II, the classic image of European children asking for Hershey's chocolate from Allied servicemembers is seared into the memories of many, the image in Afghanistan was of thousands of children mimicking writing with an invisible pencil in one hand onto the palm of the other.[3] Combined Team Uruzgan (CTU) recognized the importance of education to long-term stability, economic growth, and resistance to the Taliban.

The Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Uruzgan worked in coordination with the nongovernmental organization Save the Children to create a comprehensive plan to improve the education capacity in Uruzgan.[4] The plan was influenced by the Australian Agency for International Development's (AusAid) comprehensive needs assessment, which described the educational situation in Uruzgan and mapped out the actions required for improvement.[5] The plan included creating basic infrastructure and buildings, securing books and materials, motivating tribal elders to support education, attracting and training teachers both local and external, and coaching the Afghan education ministry to sustain long-term gains. CTU enjoyed some exceptional successes in helping to create an environment that was conducive to education and improving the province's education rate during the long term. However, the challenges associated with this effort were substantial. Despite enormous amounts of energy, coordination, and funding that were given to the effort, the payoff in terms of the gains in education versus the cost of improvements was marginal.

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[1] *Comprehensive Needs Assessment for Uruzgan Province, Afghanistan: Final Report* (Canberra: Australian Agency for International Development, 2010), 38.

[2] *Comprehensive Needs Assessment for Uruzgan Province, Afghanistan*, 40.

[3] *Uruzgan Framework Agreement* (Melbourne: Save the Children Australia, 2010), 9.

[4] *Uruzgan Framework Agreement*, 37.

[5] *Comprehensive Needs Assessment for Uruzgan Province, Afghanistan*, 38.

Dealing with Corrupt Officials

During the author's initial meetings with the Dutch PRT prior to assuming command of CTU in July 2010, he was informed that the provincial education minister in Uruzgan, Malem Rahmatullah, had been relieved by the Afghan Ministry of Education in Kabul. Rahmatullah was notoriously corrupt and was known to steal teacher's salaries, take kickbacks for construction projects, and skim money that was designated for supplies. While these activities were hard to prove, what was easy to verify was a video filmed with a cell phone of Rahmatullah abusing a young boy at his compound in front of several other members of his family and friends.[6] The Dutch used this evidence to have him put in jail. Unfortunately, Rahmatullah only spent several days in jail before he was released and moved to Kabul.

Although out of the picture in Uruzgan, Rahmatullah left behind an education system in disarray. The Afghan Ministry of Education quickly hired a new provincial education minister who possessed a master's degree and was well-educated and motivated to correct the situation. Unfortunately, this new minister did not have a strong personality and was challenged in organizing and leading his ministry. His effectiveness was further complicated by the return of Rahmatullah to Uruzgan, the former minister occupying an office in the Tarin Kowt education facility from which he threatened and bullied the new minister. The PRT was instrumental in keeping the new minister moving forward and limiting the damage caused by Rahmatullah.

Determining Initial Status

When the author arrived in Uruzgan in June 2010, the province had 260 schools for approximately 80,000 students (72,000 male and 8,000 female), according to the provincial department of education, versus 107 schools for 60,416 students (53,805 male and 6,611 female), according to the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Many of these facilities operated in borrowed premises, *qualas* (family homes), and mosque courtyards, while others were purpose-built schools. Australian and Dutch plans for the province focused on building an additional 60 schools funded by the Education Quality Improvement Program (EQUIP). The given definition of a school reflected "a long-held concept of a school that revolves around the teacher, not the building."[7] Accurately counting the number of schools in Uruzgan was, in the author's mind, highly questionable. During hundreds of kilometers traveled throughout the province, the author saw many schools that were on the books but were not in reality active schools. Verifying the numbers was extremely difficult based on security, trust, and transportation difficulties.

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[6] The author was shown video evidence of this abuse in August 2010.

[7] *Comprehensive Needs Assessment for Uruzgan Province, Afghanistan*, 39–40.

In some cases, the construction and implementation of a new school were excellent. The Malawi girl's school in downtown Tarin Kowt was one such case.[8] The contractors were paid incrementally, not all up-front.[9] The PRT and CTU engineers were able to make frequent visits to the job site to verify cost, schedule, and quality of the build. The school opened in June 2011, enabling girls to attend a high-quality school in a safe environment. Unfortunately, the Malawi girl's school was an exception, not the rule, as most schools in Uruzgan visited by the author were less successful. On one occasion, as the author flew out of the Tarin Kowt airfield toward the north, he glanced out of the Sikorsky UH-60 Black Hawk utility helicopter he was in and saw a "brand-new" school that was approximately 60 percent completed and had been abandoned. It was in a state of total disrepair. The World Bank had funded the school by paying 100 percent of the funds up-front. The contractors began constructing the school, but without the proper quality assurance, quality control, contracting, and oversight, they ran out of money and ultimately abandoned the project. This was an example of the challenges associated with building an adequate education infrastructure in Uruzgan.[10]

Kick-Starting the Schools

In the village of Zadeh Kariz, about 6.5 kilometers south of Deh Rawood, the author and Afghan National Army (ANA) brigadier general Mohammed Zafar Khan visited a beautiful granite school that had been completed in about 2008. The school was equipped with chalkboards, a courtyard with play equipment, and other amenities needed to establish a functional education facility. Unfortunately, it had no teachers, books, or students. To entice the local elders to support the school, CTU and its ANA partners coordinated for them to bring their children to the school, where the author and Australian Army warrant officer class 1 David Ashley taught classes about the United States and Australia. The Afghan children loved the classes, and demand for education from the elders increased. Hiring teachers was very difficult given the remote nature of the school, so the ANA provided security while interpreters were tasked to teach.[11] The class started out with approximately 30 students and grew to an average of 65 students within several weeks. This was not a permanent solution, but it convinced the local elders that education in Zadeh Kariz was possible. The elders agreed to the concept, and CTU was able to pressure the district and provincial governments to provide a permanent solution.

The author and Brigadier General Khan next visited a second school that was

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[8] "A+ for Effort: New Girls' School Opens in Tarin Kot, Afghanistan," Australian Department of Defence, 1 August 2011.

[9] Capt Margaret Nichols, ADF, interview with the author, 15 March 2011.

[10] *Afghanistan: Education Quality Improvement Program Project* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2010).

[11] Nichols, interview with the author, 18 March 2011.

8 kilometers farther south and whose design was very similar to the first.[12] As they approached the school through the courtyard, they entered the left wing of the main building. The first two classrooms measured about 400 square feet and featured a series of windows looking over the Helmond River as it flowed toward the northern end of Kajaki Lake. In the distance, lush green crops grew in the valley below. Under the window, we could not miss the large mounds of marijuana that had been laid out on the floor to dry. Both the first and second rooms had been converted into hashish processing areas for the drugs grown in the valley. On the plus side, the last classroom had 20 students in attendance. The teacher was engaged, prepared, and focused on providing the best education possible. General Zafar of the 4th Brigade, 205th Corps, Afghan National Army ensured that the drugs in the school were burned; however, looking at the expansive crop of marijuana below us, we were certain that much work remained to rid the area of drugs and build up school capacity.

Fair Wage

The experience at these two schools highlighted the need for teachers. The PRT was working on many programs to educate and attract teachers. Teachers were regularly sent to India for training as part of India's effort to help stabilize Afghanistan.[13] There were, however, questions regarding the applicability of the Indian curriculum to rural Afghanistan, which made it harder to recruit local teachers. Elders were less likely to nominate teachers for the program if they did not trust the effectiveness of the curriculum. Male teachers were paid $90 (USD) a month, while female teachers were paid $160 (USD) a month—women were paid more as part of an incentive to get them to come to Uruzgan.[14] Compared to what an average Afghan citizen in Uruzgan earned ($390 in 2023 dollars), this was a sizable salary, but compared to what an interpreter made it was a meager gesture. Interpreters could earn up to $1,600 (USD) per month depending on who they were working for, their clearance level, and their proficiency.[15] Interpreters and teachers were part of the same demographic in terms of who had the education, spirit, and motivation to fill these jobs. Even with additional incentive pay provided by the government of Australia, it was hard for a teacher's compensation to compete with an interpreter's salary. These challenges added to harsh living conditions, Taliban influence, tribal hesitancy to support schools, and the remote nature of Uruzgan, all of which made attracting new teachers difficult.

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[12] Nichols, interview with the author, 18 March 2011.

[13] *Comprehensive Needs Assessment for Uruzgan Province, Afghanistan*, 40. The Sakena Fund organization is representative of Indian assistance to Afghan educational efforts. See "Education: Afghan Institute of Learning," Sakena Fund, accessed 11 November 2022; and Tim Goddard, Mohammad A. Bakhshi, and Jim Frideres, "The Long Journey for Afghan Teacher Training Colleges: Accreditation and Quality Assurance," *Comparative and International Education/Éducation Comparée et Internationale* 47, no. 1 (2018).

[14] *Comprehensive Needs Assessment for Uruzgan Province, Afghanistan*, 45.

[15] This number is based on an average monthly salary estimate of 71,200 Afghani using a 2011 exchange rate of 48 Afghani to $1 (USD). See "Translator Average Salary in Afghanistan," Salary Explorer, accessed 11 November 2022.

Schools would often open without books or supplies. The CTU leadership thought that it would be relatively simple and straightforward to assist the provincial education minister in securing books, but they were mistaken. In reality, many of the books had not even been written for the grade levels to which they were assigned.[16] School supplies had neither been purchased nor was furniture in many cases. Many of the students had to walk more than an hour to reach the school.[17] CTU considered using buses to help get children to school, but there so many residual Taliban sympathizers in the area that the elders advised that buses would be seen as targets. Students, especially girls, consolidated on a bus would be more at risk than those walking to school. Many times, Western notions of what was considered necessary for a school got in the way of what was really needed. Western agents felt that each new school needed a class for every grade, new books, tons of supplies, desks, chalkboards, dry-erase boards, electricity, and other Western standard educational "requirements." In fact, all that was truly needed was a safe environment for teachers and students to meet. Everything else would come in due time.

The Influence of Tribal Leadership

CTU was fortunate to see counterinsurgency doctrine work in an amazing way. In April 2010, the CTU leadership visited with the governor of Daykundi Province, Qurban Ali Urozgani, in the city of Nili.[18] As the Coalition's UH-60 helicopters flew in over the mountains, approximately 167 kilometers north of Tarin Kowt, thousands of blooming almond trees created a lush blanket of white blossoms that covered the valley. As the helicopters descended, the CTU team saw hundreds of children in uniform approaching a school that had been built on a hill next to the governor's compound. Governor Urozgani, who was from the Hazara tribe, was particularly proud of his province's schools. The CTU team visited the school, which had recently reopened and was full of children, teachers, and books. The governor then led the team to another school in downtown Nili, which was older than the first and packed with children. There was not much furniture there, but the classes were engaging with attentive students who were excited to be learning. The school was so popular that the administrators had to hold classes in three shifts to accommodate the demand for education.[19]

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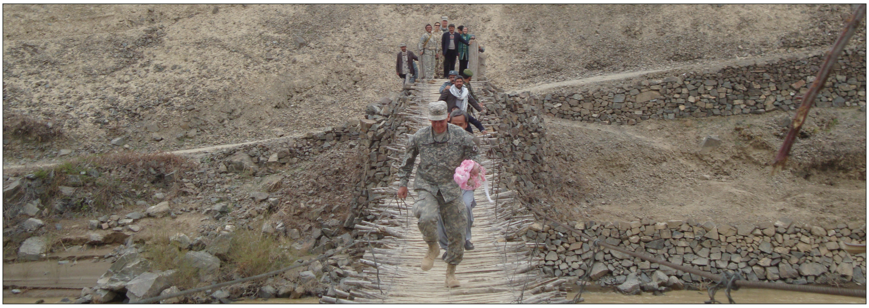
[16] The author asked the Uruzgan provincial minister of education why the Coalition was unable to get 12th-grade books. The minister responded that the books had not yet been written.

[17] Nichols, interview with the author, 7 April 2011. This interview section references discussions with several students as they arrived at their school in Nili. On the way to the school, the CTU leadership saw dozens of students walking to school across the *dascht* (desert).

[18] Author's calendar, April 2011.

[19] Nichols, interview with the author, 7 April 2011.

Figure 22. Crossing the Nili school bridge



Source: courtesy of the author.

Next, the governor insisted that the CTU team follow him to his favorite school. The group climbed into Ford pickup trucks and began an hour-and-a-half drive to a school that was located high on a bluff above the Helmand River. As the trucks left Nili, the governor sped down a dirt road that climbed the cliffs running parallel to the river. The group followed the river for the next 30 kilometers. The road had been built in sections, with local families carving out paths in the cliff 50 meters above the river and then paving them with granite blocks, many of which were hand-quarried.[20] When the convoy arrived at its destination, the vehicles were parked and the group headed away from the town toward what appeared to be a rope suspension bridge strung over the river. The bridge was made of steel cables that were strung between cliffs approximately 10 meters above the river, which was raging at that time of year. The governor stepped spritely onto the bridge and made his way across, holding hand ropes that were waist-high.

The author was fourth in line as the group proceeded across the river. By the time he started across, the bridge had begun to sway and bounce quite a bit. The author took several steps and noticed that many of the boards that were supposed to form the floor of the bridge were missing. Through the gaps in the bridge, he could see the frothing water waiting below. Initially, the author grabbed the rails and took one careful step at a time, but after a while he decided it was safer and easier just to keep his eyes focused on where his feet needed to go and run the rest of the way across. As it turned out, the local village lost three or four children each year due to a fall from the bridge.[21] CTU tried to coordinate for a new bridge to replace the existing one, but it is doubtful that it ever happened.

After crossing the bridge and walking another kilometer uphill, the group finally arrived at a beautiful school that had been completed by the United Nations Inter-

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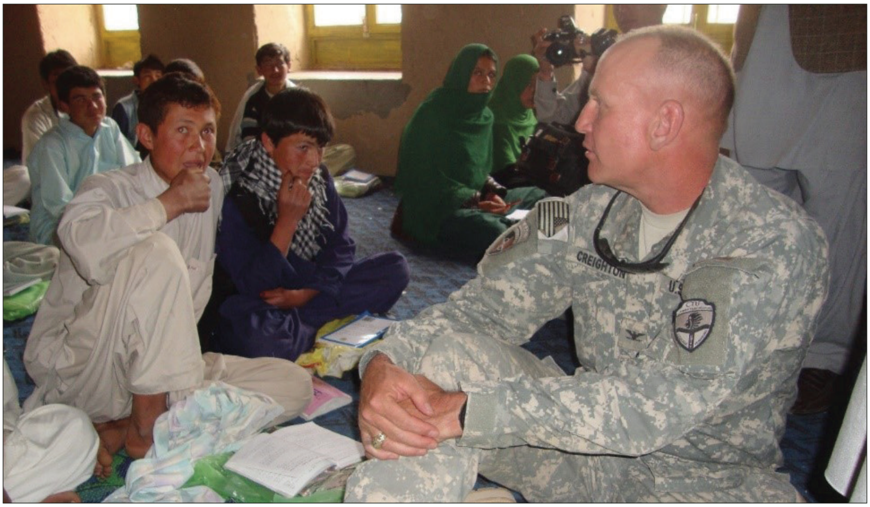
[20] As the CTU leadership proceeded to the school in pickup trucks, the driver explained how the various communities along the route were responsible for building and maintaining the granite roads that wound around the mountains overlooking the Helmand River.

[21] Nichols, interview with the author, 7 April 2011.

Figure 23. Learning third-order algebraic equations in Nili



Source: courtesy of the author.

national Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) in 2006.[22] The visitors were warmly greeted by the school's principal, whose pride in what he was doing was evident. The school supported about 100 students in all grades. The principal escorted the visitors to a classroom where about 30 12- and 13-year-old students, male and female, sat attentively and watched their teacher at the blackboard. The author could not resist and took a seat next to a young man sitting in the front row. The principal introduced the visitors, and the teacher explained what he was teaching, the pride in his students radiating from his presentation. When it was the author's turn to speak, he asked the boy beside him what he was studying. The boy turned to the author with his notebook and explained how he was solving third-order algebraic problems.[23] The author was—and still is—amazed at the impression that this visit had on him. After all the education challenges that CTU had been through in its area of operations, sitting on a dirt floor in a town that seemed to be right next door to Shangri La, the author witnessed the epitome of what the Coalition were trying to achieve. It could work. Coalition efforts to improve education in Afghanistan were worth every bit of frustration.

Education Is Not Just for Children

CTU recognized that the training the ANA and Afghan National Police (ANP) received was especially challenging because most of the Afghan soldiers and police officers could not read or write.[24] To facilitate training and education in the ranks, CTU sponsored literacy classes for both ANA and ANP forces. CTU also developed classes for checkpoint commanders, improvised explosive device (IED) destruction, and other subjects that improved the performance of the Afghan security forces. The teacher's training school in Tarin Kowt was another example of adult education that was provided to fill critical positions in Uruzgan.[25] Finally, the CTU hospital coordinated with local medical providers and offered classes in a variety of medical procedures and health care practices. CTU took advantage of the opportunities present to increase literacy and education for adults as well as children.

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[22] For more on the UNICEF program, see Cream Wright, "UNICEF Education Strategy, 2006–2015," *Forced Migration Review* (July 2006): 4–6.
[23] Nichols, interview with the author, 7 April 2011.

Leadership Lessons Learned

Question "Facts" and Reports

Reports would arrive in the author's inbox proudly stating that more than 150 new schools had been built in CTU's area of operations, with thousands of children attending school. Initially, the author looked at these reports as progress in a positive direction—until he visited the schools in person. At some locations, the buildings had never been finished. At others, the local children were not allowed to attend school because of negative tribal influence. The author went to schools in which classrooms were filled with drying hashish and others at which there were no books or supplies. He obviously had reason to question the data and sources. He asked how many children were in classrooms that actually had teachers. He asked if they had all the books they needed. As it turned out, the 12th-grade books had yet to be written. As a leader, this situation reinforced the author's need to be inquisitive, ask questions, and challenge reports. Understanding the veracity of reports and accuracy of data helped frame the situation in a much better way.

Do Not Dwell on the Problem—Address the Solution

During the author's time as commander of CTU, there were many opportunities to let a negative attitude take over his thought process as a leader. In particular, the schools near Deh Rawood had been heartbreaking. The opportunity to educate children was lost there, and hit the author in the face as soon as he walked into a classroom filled with drying hashish. The expectations of the children in Uruzgan were prevalent. They always greeted members of the Coalition with one hand flat like a piece of paper and the other miming a pencil writing on the flat palm facing up.[26] The children on the streets only heightened the intensity to find solutions. The frustration of failed opportunities was ultimately outweighed by the children's outcry for more education, and the failure to achieve educational goals in some areas was overshadowed by successes in others. As a leader, keeping one's eye on the ultimate mission allows one to absorb setbacks while searching for better ways to get the job done. A leader's attitude is pervasive. What the leader says and does will almost immediately set the tone for the entire organization. If the author had focused on the numerous setbacks in achieving better education in Uruzgan rather than the potential solutions that could be implemented, the great things that were accomplished never would have happened.

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[24] Frank James, "Afghan Army's 90% Illiteracy Rate Big Training Obstacle," NPR, 16 September 2009.

[25] Author's notes, book 5, 18 December 2010; and "Teacher Training," SaharEducation, accessed 15 September 2023.

Firsthand Knowledge Is Necessary to Establish, Teach, and Coach to High Standards

The author received regular reports that schools were being built, children were going to class, and teachers were involved in planning and administering lessons. Verifying these reports with firsthand visits showed what was truly happening. Many of the reports were erroneous, and whether this was out of negligence, deception, or ignorance is irrelevant. What mattered was that by visiting the schools; by talking to teachers, parents, and students; by understanding the challenges in building schools in remote, less-secure areas; and by getting a firsthand account of the challenges present, the author was able to make a more informed assessment of the mission at hand. With this knowledge and a more refined understanding, CTU modified plans, changed priorities, and improved effectiveness. One example of this change in priority was when CTU airlifted books and supplies to the district of Gizab immediately following their first visit there.[27] Firsthand experience helped hold the team accountable, improved the quality of reporting, and contributed to a positive impact on education.

With an improved level of understanding, the author was able to enforce higher standards of performance. To achieve these standards, CTU used examples of schools that were running well to demonstrate what "right" looked like. The CTU team coached both Afghan and Coalition leaders so that they understood these higher standards and enforced the same quality of performance on other schools while correcting deficiencies in existing schools wherever possible. Gaining firsthand experience about how schools were performing had a dramatic impact on how CTU worked with its Afghan partners to overcome substantial obstacles while improving education throughout Uruzgan.

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[26] The author met with hundreds of children during walks through the villages and towns of Uruzgan. The children were eager for education, as indicated by the sign they gave that suggested a desire for pen and paper.

[27] Nichols, interview with the author, 22 September 2010; and author's notes, travel book, 12 November 2010.

CHAPTER 16

Commander’s Emergency Response Program

Fight Bureaucracy with a Tenacious Attitude

After the United States-led Coalition invaded Iraq in 2003, the U.S. Army leadership realized that if a program could be set up to get local military-age males back to work, some of their dignity might be restored, they would be able to feed their families, important cleanup and maintenance tasks would be addressed, and they would not be as likely to join insurgent groups.[1] The congressional intent for the Commander’s Emergency Response Program (CERP) according to the Army is as follows:

> CERP enables local commanders during contingency operations to respond with a nonlethal weapon to urgent, small-scale, humanitarian relief, and reconstruction projects and services that immediately assist the indigenous population. The Department of Defense (DOD) defines “urgent” as any chronic or acute inadequacy of an essential good or service that in the judgment of the local commander calls for immediate action. Prior coordination with community leaders helps increase goodwill between the two nations.[2]

According to a 2008 report by the Office of the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction (SIGIR), “CERP guidance directs commanders to focus funds on projects that improve water and sanitation, electricity, and civic cleanup and that employ the most Iraqis over an extended period of time.”[3]

The Army established CERP to enable units to facilitate projects in their areas of operation. Commanders at all levels were authorized to disperse funds as the situation dictated in the various communities. Most commanders acted judiciously and were able to begin to bring recovery and stability in their areas of operation.[4] However, the nature of the program was decentralized and not regulated with the same level of checks and balances that were typical of a U.S.-based program or even of a humanitarian effort that occurred in a more peaceful environment. Abuses occurred in some cases. Money was spent without complete understanding of how effective it was and without what many would consider Western levels of accountability. Consequently, the benefits of the program were blurred by the inaccuracies, fraud, and waste inherent in execution. The challenges to maintain accountability were compounded by security concerns, which made oversight and accountability more difficult. Congress finally took action to add more accountability into the program. According to a 2018 report by the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, "congressional committees expressed concern that the program had grown beyond the scope originally intended by Congress and become an alternative U.S. development program. In addition, we, and others in the oversight community, have reported on the importance of monitoring and evaluating CERP's effectiveness."[5]

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[1] Stuart W. Bowen Jr., *Commander’s Emergency Response Program in Iraq Funds Many Large-Scale Projects* (Washington, DC: Office of the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction, 2008).

[2] *The Commander’s Emergency Response Program*, Army Technical Publication 1-06.2 (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2017), 1-1.

[3] *The Commander’s Emergency Response Program*, 1-1.

[4] John F. Sopko, *Commander’s Emergency Response Program: DOD Has Not Determined the Full Extent to Which Its Program and Projects, Totaling $1.5 Billion in Obligations, Achieved Their Objectives and Goals in Afghanistan from Fiscal Years 2009 through 2013* (Washington, DC: Office of the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, 2018), ii. According to this source, “RAND found that, if used correctly, CERP projects were a useful tool for [U.S. Forces-Afghanistan] to improve rapport between U.S. military units and the local population.” Daniel Egel et al., *Investing in the Fight: Assessing the Use of the Commander’s Emergency Response Program in Afghanistan* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 2016), https://doi.org/10.7249/RR1508.

When the author arrived in Uruzgan Province in 2010, CERP was presented as a fully funded tool that could help units perform lower-level infrastructure maintenance tasks as well as complete larger-level projects. In practice, however, the program had turned into a bureaucratic nightmare.[6] The author's frustration with CERP was highlighted during an interview regarding his meeting with the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) Regional Command South (RC South) CERP management team.

Broken Processes

From the author's perspective, U.S. contracting and CERP processes were beyond broken by any measure. There was more money available than could be spent effectively with adequate oversight. Local contractors and workers had an idea of how much money was available, so they drove up their prices well beyond reasonable value in Afghanistan. The simple cash-for-work projects were effective in the short term, especially in less secure areas, but in the long term more permanent jobs were needed for extended stability. CERP saw initial success in conflicted areas, which led to a "more is better" attitude. There were millions of dollars allocated to the program, and with that came more rules and regulations. Combined

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[5] Sopko, *Commander's Emergency Response Program*, 1.

[6] Sopko, *Commander's Emergency Response Program*, iii, 7. The scope of the CERP program is highlighted in a letter from the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction to the U.S. secretary of defense, the commander of U.S. Central Command, and the commander of U.S. Forces–Afghanistan on 30 April 2018 that details "CERP projects initiated from fiscal years 2009 through 2013. During this time, [the U.S. Department of Defense] obligated $1.5 billion (58 percent of all obligated CERP funds) and initiated 45,846 projects (80 percent of all CERP projects). CERP is designed to enable U.S. commanders to meet urgent humanitarian relief and reconstruction requirements that directly benefit the local population. U.S. commanders used CERP to support counterinsurgency and other U.S. objectives in Afghanistan, including improving economic development, supporting the Afghan government, protecting the Afghan people, and undermining the insurgency."

Team Uruzgan (CTU) was encouraged to maximize the resources at its disposal and look at larger work programs that could extend employment periods and provide more value to communities. With guidance to maximize CERP for larger projects, the focus turned to continuing road improvement in areas that had recently been secured between the provincial and district centers in Uruzgan.

CTU was instructed to use CERP to improve the roads. The first guidance was to break the project into $100,000 (USD) increments. The CTU engineering team under Australian Army major Jennifer Harris spent two weeks analyzing how to phase in multiple $100,000 projects that would connect road improvements between the major population centers. She submitted the project based on close coordination with CERP administrators. After two weeks, CTU was told to redo the proposal with multiple $500,000 (USD) projects. Again, two weeks of planning and two weeks of project consideration were followed by feedback to recalculate the proposal with one big contract in excess of $1 million (USD). After another iteration and now several months of work, CTU was told that the project should be done in multiples of $100,000 (USD)—right back to where the command began several months and iterations earlier. This is an actual example of the frustration associated with the way in which a very successful and effective program had evolved with too much bureaucratic oversight.

The second- and third-order effects were equally frustrating. To establish priorities, CTU coordinated with Afghan engineers and provincial leadership. This coordination naturally raised expectations about improved road quality, additional employment opportunities, and increased trade due to enhanced transportation systems. Many of these expectations were not met. Consequently, trust eroded between the Coalition and the Afghan government as well as between Afghan leaders and their citizens. What should have been an opportunity to improve infrastructure, jobs, economic activity, and trust was squandered.

One Troop Commander's Journey

CERP became so convoluted that even the process of qualifying commanders to administer funds at the company level became almost impossible. The experience of a troop commander from the U.S. Army's 2d Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment, exemplifies how confusing systems can get when subordinates are not trusted to implement programs.[7] This commander was preparing to deploy his troop from Germany to Afghanistan when he was ordered to take the CERP process course in Germany. The squadron's plan was to certify all commanders on CERP procedures before they departed their home base. The squadron coordinated and executed a course that took commanders away from preparation duties for approximately one week to make sure that they were approved and certified for CERP. When the troop commander got to Kandahar, Afghanistan, on his way to Uruzgan, he was told that the rules had changed and the commanders had to spend another several days recertifying in Kandahar. The commander dutifully pulled away from command responsibilities to recertify in CERP. With certifications complete, the commander traveled via combat ground movement approximately 106 kilometers from Tarin Kowt to Deh Rawood. After several attempts to use his CERP funding, the commander was informed that the rules had changed and that he would be retrained in Kandahar before he could use the money allocated to him.[8]

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[7] Capt Margaret Nichols, ADF, interview with the author, 15 March 2011. The author had several discussions with RC South CERP managers regarding the challenges that the U.S. Army's 2d Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment, faced due to subordinate commanders' difficulties in obtaining CERP certification.

After two certifications in less than three months, one in Germany and the other in Kandahar, the troop commander had to be retrained again in Kandahar. As the benefits of CERP had proven to be exceptional, he left his command for Kandahar to get recertified again. This time, however, it was not so easy, and the risk was much greater. As the commander at a forward operating base (FOB), his duties were essential to combat success. The benefits to recertify in CERP processes outweighed the risks associated with the commander's absence. En route to take the retraining course, the commander waited for transportation from Camp Hadrian to Tarin Kowt, waited for transportation from Tarin Kowt to Kandahar, took the training, and then waited for transportation back to his FOB. The training period, including travel, took the commander away from his post for approximately 10 days. The operational cost to bureaucratic requirements was significant and ultimately served to hinder rather than enhance mission success.

Wasted Potential

CERP had excellent potential to spark the local economy, keep young men away from the Taliban, and provide employment toward positive ends. In Uruzgan, however, that potential was wasted. The constantly changing rules and administrative uncertainty created a situation in which the money allocated for CERP was difficult to use. What was most frustrating was that CTU knew what could be accomplished with money at the lowest levels and had been allocated the funds necessary for execution, but the money could not be spent because of the ineptitude of U.S. bureaucratic systems. The command lost an opportunity to build trust, improve living conditions, and move toward a more stable Uruzgan.

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[8] SSgt Helen M. Searcy, "Commander's Emergency Response Program Training Pilot Program," Army.mil, 2 July 2009.

Leadership Lessons Learned

Know Yourself and Your Organization

Knowing oneself applies to organizational aspects as well as personal preferences. Knowing how to get things done within a leader's organizational construct is vital. In the case described above, CTU had several ways to pursue improving the roads in Uruzgan. Once the command realized that the CERP funding was going to be a long, confusing, and drawn-out process, it looked at other ways to achieve the same impact.

First, CTU engineers became masters of the bureaucratic process within the CERP system. These Australian engineers were dedicated to deciphering a complex U.S. system. They developed relationships with the funding approval sources. They met and talked with engineers in higher headquarters units to learn how to meet the specific requirements of the proposals.[9] They modified the proposals as advised and continued to work within the system. Changes to people running the system and to the processes required made this a never-ending challenge. CTU was able to get some projects approved by working within the system, but these successes were minimal compared to the potential gains to be made.

The engineers looked to different countries to provide support. As an organization with direct ties into more than nine countries at the national level, CTU was able to leverage support from other national sources. The Dutch and German work on the road between Tarin Kowt and Chora, 42 kilometers of asphalt yellow-line road, was the anchor for the provincial road building effort. Smaller projects in the town of Tarin Kowt were funded by other countries with excellent results. The roads were paved and had exceptional drainage. The U.S. Department of State funded the bridge over the Tiri Rod River in Tarin Kowt, which reduced the travel time across the river by up to 45 minutes and made crossings possible even during the rainy season. Having a complete understanding of the capabilities and potential support available from other countries enabled CTU to achieve the same results with different assets.

CTU's organic engineer capacity smoothed the most critical obstacles to the roadbuilding effort. On the road from Tarin Kowt to Khas Uruzgan, the brigade was asked to demolish a *bazaar* (outdoor market) that was located astride the main road. CTU used its bulldozers and engineering equipment to tear down the bazaar and repair the road in the Mirabad Valley. Although only about half a kilometer long in terms of the length of road repaired, the impact was dramatic.

Knowing one's organizational capabilities, systems, procedures, and extended assets provides flexibility and capability that could be left idle in a critical situation.

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[9] Author's notes, book 4, 10–11 October 2010. This particular meeting represents several that were attended by the author.

There was frustration regarding the use of CERP, which was exacerbated by CTU's knowledge of the exceptional potential it provided if the command could make it work. The engineers continued working to make the system function for CTU but at the same time explored any and all internal systems available to achieve its mission. Knowing where these assets were, how to access them, and how to employ them multiplied CTU's impact dramatically.

Follow Through

The scope of CERP in Uruzgan necessitated close coordination with the provincial governor and his chief engineer. The CTU team worked with the provincial leadership to verify which roads would be improved when. Expectations grew as the size and scope of the program became clear. The governor and his security team coordinated with tribal elders along the routes to develop local security plans. Applying lessons from the road from Tarin Kowt to Chora, CTU wanted to allow the leaders of the villages along the route to benefit from the project by providing security for them. This ground-level coordination raised expectations down the line to community members in the villages along the different routes. By not delivering the roads or even starting work on the roads in a timely manner, CTU undermined the credibility of the provincial governor and the Coalition in the eyes of the local people throughout the province.

CTU had a trusted relationship with the provincial government based on successes seen with other projects, but the more the road building projects were delayed, the more difficult it became to sustain the same level of cooperation. Some level of trust was rebuilt by being open and honest with all interested parties, but the command could not avoid a degradation of the relationship. In retrospect, CTU should have been more insistent in agreements with the CERP administrators that the procedures agreed to at the beginning of the process were to be adhered to throughout. If CTU had not been subject to so many internal Coalition changes to the process, its Afghan partners could have been approached with a plan that would have been seen through to completion.

CHAPTER 17

Building a New Police and Army Headquarters

Follow through on Promises

One of Combined Team Uruzgan's (CTU) first leadership patrols in Uruzgan Province included stops at the construction site for an unfinished U.S.-funded provincial police headquarters compound and an inadequately finished headquarters compound for the 4th Brigade of the Afghan National Army's (ANA) 205th "Hero" Corps.[1] Inside the police headquarters, engineers found loose 82-millimeter mortar rounds and cell phone components that were identified as the tools of an improvised explosive device (IED) maker. Not knowing what else might be found, the leadership patrol evacuated the compound and called in an explosive ordnance disposal team to destroy the explosives found and clear the rest of the buildings. The author was amazed that such an important project in the middle of downtown Tarin Kowt was essentially being used by anti-Coalition insurgents. The biggest question was why the new police headquarters, located less than a kilometer from the provincial governor's compound, was essentially abandoned and unfinished. Completing this well-intentioned and important project, which had stalled due to a cumbersome bureaucracy, poor contracting procedures, high leadership turnover, and a lack of proper supervision, became one of the author's top priorities as commander of CTU. His focus on sorting out the myriad of details associated with the project also helped him build his relationship with the provincial chief of police, Afghan National Police (ANP) brigadier general Juma Gul Hemat.

On 15 March 2011, the status of the provincial police station, according to an interview with the author, was as follows:

> I found out tonight that in the process of building the new police [headquarters], it took us [the Coalition] 10 months to figure out that we have now contracted a $3 million contract out of Kabul, who is subcontracting it for $1.8 million to the guy we wanted to hire in the first place. So, the delta of $1.2 million is going into the contractor's pocket, because we are too insanely stupid and our processes are absolutely broken. The concept [is] that you would hire a contractor out of Kandahar to fulfill a simple contract here, when you are getting the same three perfectly legitimate contracts out of Tarin Kowt, but you pick the KAF [Kandahar Airfield] guy

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[1] Mark Ray, "Provincial Police Headquarters Opens in Uruzgan," DVIDS, 1 June 2012. The police station was eventually completed in summer 2012.

> who fails to execute the contract . . . so [when] you start the contract in September, for execution in October, the guy shows up two months late in December, and then we think we have a process that works. It's absolutely false.[2]

The next day, this situation continued, "The engineers still haven't started the work on the police [headquarters] . . . wheelchair ramps and handicapped access was the reason why they couldn't proceed."[3]

On a similar patrol to the headquarters compound for the ANA's 4th Brigade, 205th "Hero" Corps, located next to Camp Holland outside of Tarin Kowt, the author saw a compound that had been "completed" and occupied, but its condition was almost as frustrating as the unoccupied police compound.[4] The kitchen was incomplete. The bathrooms had been finished, but they were subsequently ruined by Afghan soldiers who were not accustomed to Western bathroom systems.[5] There was a large auditorium that was new but unused and condemned due to low-quality workmanship. These are just a few examples of shortcomings on a project that was officially considered completed but fell far short of satisfactory standards.

The Police Station Project Abandoned

The provincial police in Tarin Kowt needed better facilities if they were to play a major role in an Afghan government-led security effort after Coalition forces had departed the country. Following close coordination, the Combined Security Transition Command–Afghanistan (CSTC-A) and the Afghan Ministry of Interior Affairs decided that the police headquarters in Tarin Kowt was a high-priority project. CSTC-A was a major multinational headquarters organization that reported directly to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and was tasked with coordinating and implementing large development projects throughout Afghanistan. CSTC-A has tasked the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers with the construction of the provincial police compound during the 2008 timeframe.

The project, which included four major buildings and several outbuildings, was 70-percent complete when the Afghan contractors from Kabul and Kandahar stopped paying their subcontractors and fled the area.[6] They took with them what was left of the money given to them to complete the project. All funds for the compound were expended before it was completed. The Army Corps of Engineers was compelled to strike a deal with Matiullah Khan, the local warlord in command of the Kandak Amniante Uruzgan (KAU) militia and ANP colonel, to secure the compound.[7] The idea was that he would keep the site secure indefinitely.

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[2] Capt Margaret Nichols, ADF, interview with the author, 15 March 2011.

[3] Nichols, interview with the author, 16 May 2011.

[4] Author's notes, book 2, 24 July 2010.

[5] Joshua Partlow, "In Helping Afghanistan Build up Its Security Forces, U.S. Is Trimming the Frills," *Washington Post*, 26 August 2011.

[6] Nichols, interview with the author, 15 March 2011. See, for example, Dion Nissenbaum and Hashim Shukoor, "Contractor Leaves Afghan Police Stations Half-complete," McClatchyDC, 16 June 2015.

The previous Dutch commanders in Uruzgan viewed the provincial police compound as a U.S. project and let it sit unfinished. They also chose not to deal with the local police chief, who, although corrupt, was able to secure the population by resolving conflicts and expanding police presence throughout the province in a mostly professional manner. This lack of ownership for the project, frequent changeover in Coalition leaders and contract managers, poor contracting procedures, and distrust of local officials created a situation in which there was no one who felt responsible for the half-completed project. Indeed, when the author returned to base after his initial reconnaissance patrol and made inquiries as to the status of the project, it took several weeks to find documentation on the project and determine exactly how it had come to fail.

A went wrong in Afghanistan, and from a national perspective, one could argue that this project was no more than a drop in the bucket. CTU's frustrated attempts to get the project restarted so that it could be completed are symbolic of the seemingly dysfunctional processes created to implement the large number of development projects in Uruzgan. Failure to complete projects made building trust between the Coalition, the Afghan provincial and local leadership, and the people of Uruzgan very difficult. The leaders and citizens of Uruzgan had been promised a new police headquarters, but that promise was unfulfilled. In the end, the four-acre incomplete compound stood as a monument to the Coalition's ineptitude.

Bringing the Project Back Online

To get the project back on track, CTU had to find a way to "back pay" Matiullah Khan for security services that had protected the partially built but unoccupied provincial police headquarters for two years.[8] The original contractor responsible for the project had departed the area, and there was no money remaining on the original contract to pay Khan's guards. Even if there had been additional construction funds available, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers could not pay the guards because that would have violated U.S. regulations on how construction funds can be expended. The Army Corps of Engineers tried to solve this problem by initiating a new contract, but it could not include back pay for two years of security. It took seven months to get the exceptions and authorizations needed for the guards to receive their back pay. The solution that was finally found to pay the guards included a deal coordinated with Matiullah Khan.[9]

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[7] Bette Dam, "How Flawed Information Created a 'Taliban' Threat: Australian Special Forces in Oruzgan Were Unaware that Their Intelligence Was Compromised Right from the Start," *Australian*, 29 January 2021. This article describes the complexity of dealing with Matiullah Khan, who knew how to shift blame to the "Taliban," while taking advantage of security lapses to capitalize on business opportunities.

[8] Author's notes, book 4, 11 October 2010. The author had numerous discussions with the RC South engineers to determine how to break through the bureaucratic challenges to restarting the program.

After two years of inactivity, the Afghan contractors were ready to finish the job, but again the Army Corps of Engineers stepped in and stopped work on the project. In Afghanistan, the Army Corps of Engineers was required to adhere to certain specifications on construction projects, so parts of the plan had to be redesigned. This continued for several months, with the project commencing in fits and starts. There were also additional regulations, occupational safety and health administration rules, and other U.S.-based criteria that the Army Corps of Engineers was required to follow.[10] These regulations were designed for use in the United States but blindly transferred to projects in Afghanistan. When handrails and wheelchair ramps did not meet U.S. codes, the contractors had to stop their work. Accessibility is important, but the Coalition lost another two months reworking the plans.[11] Afghan contractors were not prepared to meet the requirements of U.S. plumbing and electric codes either. Insisting on adherence to Western plumbing standards hardly made sense, because most Afghans did not use Western facilities and often ruined the plumbing soon after installation.[12]

Finally, there were the myriad rules and regulations that required Afghan companies to fill out mountains of paperwork, which they simply were not prepared to complete. The Army Corps of Engineers would help contractors with these tasks on a limited basis, but with the changeover and rotation of officers working on the projects, consistency was hard to maintain. Despite best intentions, most contractors were on their own to navigate the constantly changing paperwork requirements. During changeovers of project managing officers, the volume of paperwork and challenges associated with each project made the proper handoff from one project officer to the next practically impossible. After 11 frustrating months, and intervention at the flag-officer level, the provincial police compound project had barely restarted and was still several months from completion when the author departed Afghanistan in June 2011. The project was eventually finished in April 2012.[13]

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[9] This situation was resolved by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the project was allowed to begin and eventually be completed.

[10] Nichols, interview with the author, 23 May 2011.

[11] The CTU engineer section expressed frustration that the author continued to pressure them to keep the project moving, while the RC South engineering team seemed to find more obstacles to forward progress.

[12] Heidi M. Peters, *Wartime Contracting in Afghanistan: Analysis and Issues for Congress* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2011), 3. On visits to the 4th Brigade's headquarters, the author inspected the bathroom facilities built based on the U.S. contract. The Western-style toilets were often broken or destroyed. Reports from Afghan leadership were that they were rarely used because the Afghan troops were not accustomed to the facilities.

[13] Ray, "Provincial Police Headquarters Opens in Uruzgan."

The Afghan National Army Brigade Compound

The provincial police compound was not the only development project that suffered from a severe lack of quality assurance and control. Adjacent to CTU's headquarters at Camp Holland, the headquarters compound for the 4th Brigade, 205th "Hero" Corps, had been "renovated" via a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers contract. The author's relationships with the commanders of the 4th Brigade, ANA brigadier generals Abdul Hamid and Mohammed Zafar Khan, were vital to mission success, so he made the 100-meter trek from his office through a guarded gate to visit them in the brigade commander's office several times each month.[14]

The walk to the brigade's headquarters compound, though short, was painful for the author, as it served as a constant reminder of how the best intentions could lead to failed promises. The compound had been prioritized as an important project, but oversight of its implementation was not. Much was left to be completed, and much that had been completed was substandard. There were aspects of the project that made complete sense from a Western perspective but absolutely no sense from an Afghan perspective. Other aspects were left unfinished or complete but deteriorating rapidly.[15]

The first building the author approached when he arrived at the compound was the size of a small theater. It was only about 70-percent complete and had been condemned. This theater was not part of the original project; it had been requested by the brigade commander who was in command at the time of the build. The contractor responsible for the project knew that it was not in the scope of their work but accepted the task regardless. The contractor then ran out of money before the theater was complete.[16] The Army Corps of Engineers, which had oversight for the project, did not know who was responsible at the time, only that the funds had run out prior to completion. The contractor had been given 100 percent of the funds for the project up-front, with very little feedback and milestones required to ensure project completion. The contractor was consequently able to scope and skim his profit margin prior to even beginning the work.

Past the condemned theater was a bathroom and shower complex. The facility had been built to standard, but no thought had gone into cultural requirements or maintenance and sustainment. All of the toilets, which were high-quality, standard Western toilets, had been damaged. None were functional. The concept of sitting on a flush toilet was completely foreign to Afghan soldiers, who were used to the traditional drop toilets used in Afghanistan. The showers and sinks were functional, but they were not used regularly and were filthy. Some of the challenges were attributable to cultural differences in equipment. The lack of maintenance was due to lack of supplies, limited knowledge of the systems, indifference to the systems installed, and poor leadership in the ANA. The money spent on the latrine facility was mostly wasted because the Coalition did not provide systems compatible with Afghan norms.[17]

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[14] Author's notes, book 2, 24 July 2010.

[15] J. C. Delgadillo, " 'Building Strong' for the People in Uruzgan Province," Army.mil, 22 January 2013. This article describes the completion of portions of the 4th Brigade headquarters more than two years after the author's initial visits.

[16] Details of the unfinished theater were related to the author during his first visit to the 4th Brigade headquarters in July 2010.

The compound's barracks and headquarters buildings were completed and in fairly good condition, but the support buildings were incomplete or not built at all. The motor pool was not completed. The kitchen area was adequate by Afghan standards, but the author got the sense that it had not been built by the contractor but rather been converted from a previous building. There were several classroom buildings that had been completed, but most were lacking the furniture and supplies necessary to make them fully functional.

Although this project had been completed and signed approved, it left much to be desired. Brigadier General Khan understood the condition of what he had inherited and was not satisfied with its status. The CTU leadership pushed to have additional contracts made, but the fact that the compound had technically been completed, at least in the eyes of the Army Corps of Engineers, made it difficult to make drastic improvements. CTU considered other sources of funding through the Australian Mentoring Task Force, but it was not enough to affect the large-scale alterations that would be required to make the compound functional. Eventually, projects for new units were initiated, which allowed some of the needed improvements to go forward.[18]

Leadership Lessons Learned

Enforce Standard Contracting Practices

Compare the provincial police headquarters compound in Uruzgan with the beautiful school next door, where Afghan girls were already receiving an education. Without many of the roadblocks that U.S organizations had to deal with, the Australian-led Provincial Reconstruction Team was able to build this school in less than a year. The Australians tracked the progress with regular check-ins and aggressive quality assurance, while coordinating their activity with the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID). If the U.S. organizations had proceeded similarly, corrupt Afghan contractors would have been detected quickly. Moreover, unlike the U.S. practice of paying contractors up-front, the Australians dispensed funds in phases throughout construction. Finally, the Australians did

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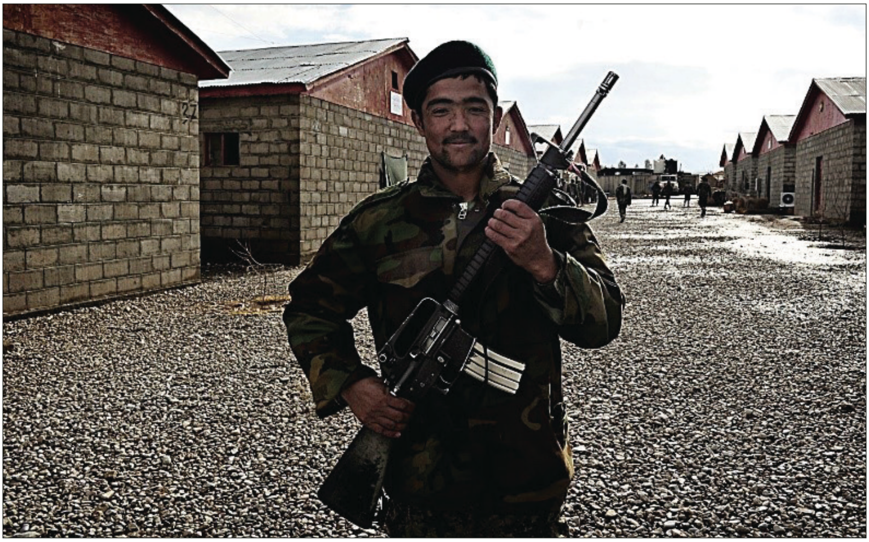
[17] The author toured the 4th Brigade bathroom facilities in July 2010. The explanation for the status of the latrine was provided by 4th Brigade leaders and CTU engineers who also visited.

[18] Delgadillo, " 'Building Strong' for the People in Uruzgan Province."

Figure 24. Afghan soldier on main road of "completed" brigade compound



Source: J. C. Delgadillo, " 'Building Strong' for the People in Uruzgan Province," Army.mil, 22 January 2013.

not face the roadblock of construction regulations built for their home country—instead, they constructed their projects in accordance with Afghan standards.

Build and Sustain Solid Relationships

Completing the provincial police headquarters compound was important not only for improving the effectiveness of the Afghan police but also for gaining respect for the Afghan local, provincial, and national governments. When the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) or the United States promises to make improvements in cooperation with the Afghan government, the people see a more effective and trustworthy government. The Coalition ultimately failed to execute these commitments to standard. The trust that CTU had built with the Afghan government was eroded by this failure. Subsequently, the relationship between the Afghan people and their government was eroded as well. The success of counterinsurgency operations is contingent on assisting the local government in earning the trust of its people.

Avoid Self-Inflicted Wounds

Many obstacles facing the Coalition in these project efforts were self-inflicted. Problems with contracting and money disbursement were directly related to the massive bureaucracy associated with contracting. Project regulations intended to ensure proper accountability and project management created an environment that hindered rather than facilitated project completion. The processes used in Uruzgan were regulated so tightly that they wasted time and money, which was due in part to Coalition inefficiency.

Staff turnover at all levels made consistent project management very difficult. CTU had three different managing engineers during the author's tenure as commander. Each managing engineer was extremely competent and professional, as were their counterparts at the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers at ISAF's Regional Command South. However, the forced turnover of personnel at such a pace ensured that regardless of how good they were, the volume of projects and money being expended was close to impossible to manage without introducing risk to project completion. The United States committed to too many projects to manage and complete effectively given the massive regulatory requirements and turnover of Coalition forces.

Leadership at all levels of an organization is required to manage the number of projects being executed at any one time. The complexity and duration of each project impacts how much the staff can effectively manage. The security environment can restrict the ability of the staff to provide proper oversight and constrain the cost of projects. Contracting and contractor capacity will impact the volume of projects that can be executed to standard. Leaders need to take all of these factors into account when prioritizing projects that are accepted and those that are postponed or not accepted.

CHAPTER 18

Delivering Winter Wheat

Build Local Capacity or Set Leaders up for Failure

In September 2010, Combined Team Uruzgan (CTU) was approached by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) representative in Uruzgan Province about the potential of using winter wheat as an alternative cash crop to the prevalent poppy production.[1] CTU agreed with the representative's assessment that poppy cultivation in Uruzgan was out of control and that the province's climate, water, soil, and farming capability fully supported the winter wheat program.[2] The plan, from the perspective of the U.S. Department of State, was to use winter wheat as a method of enhancing the "Afghan First" and "Afghan Lead" philosophies.[3] CTU agreed that using Afghan companies, transportation, and citizens to secure the wheat seed, transport the seeds to Uruzgan, and then distribute to Afghan farmers for planting made all the sense in the world. In practice, it evolved into a development nightmare. The U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) found that "while the Afghan government's capacity to carry out its core functions has improved, key ministries, including the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock—which works to restore Afghanistan's licit agricultural economy through increasing production and productivity, natural resource management, improved physical infrastructure, and market development—lack the ability to implement their mission."[4]

Initial Assessments

Agricultural estimates provided to CTU indicated that the winter wheat seeds needed to be in the ground by November 2010. With a September 2010 start date, the initial estimates were that moving the seeds approximately 800 kilometers from the Herat Province to Tarin Kowt, the capital of Uruzgan, was reasonable.[5]

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[1] *Comprehensive Needs Assessment for Uruzgan Province, Afghanistan: Final Report* (Canberra: Australian Agency for International Development, 2010), 49; and Bruce N. Boyer, *Audit of USAID/Afghanistan's Alternative Development Program Expansion, South West* (Manila, Philippines: Office of the Inspector General, U.S. Agency for International Development, 2010), 2.

[2] "Improved Seed and Fertilizer Distribution Project (FAO)" (unpublished Afghanistan National Re-Construction Coordination annual report, 2010, author's library), 28–30. This program confirms the requirement and scope of the effort to find and deliver alternative crops.

[3] "Scientists Predict Winter Wheat Crop Will Be Key to a Food-Secure Afghanistan," United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 25 September 2002. This article describes USAID's initial thought process regarding the establishment of a winter wheat program. For more on the Afghan First initiatives, see *Afghanistan: Key Oversight Issues* (Washington, DC: Government Accountability Office, 2013), 21.

[4] *Afghanistan Development: Enhancements to Performance Management and Evaluations Efforts Could Improve USAID's Agricultural Programs* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2010), 26.

[5] See, "ANA, U.S. Special Forces Team up to Provide Winter Wheat Seed," DVIDS, 8 November 2010.

Based on these initial assessments, CTU coordinated with the provincial governor and his ministers to receive and distribute the wheat when it arrived. This project was set up to augment a longer-term Dutch project that would enable as many as 8,000 families to be supported with wheat-growing capabilities. With this coordination, CTU had committed to providing wheat seeds to Uruzgan using Afghan logistics capabilities. The provincial government had not asked for the winter wheat, but it was not going to turn it down.[6]

Misjudging Capabilities

The challenges associated with this effort began almost immediately after CTU made initial coordination with the provincial government. The CTU leadership recognized that although the Afghan First concept made sense on paper in Kabul, if left to happen on its own in Uruzgan, the project would certainly fail. Consequently, CTU began to closely monitor the progress of the wheat seeds. At first, there was difficulty in identifying where the seeds were coming from. It was initially thought that they would come from Kabul, but CTU soon discovered that they were in fact from Herat. Coordinating with the USAID representative in Uruzgan, who had to ask his leaders in Kabul to coordinate with the Afghan company contracted to deliver the wheat, took more than a week. Receiving an answer from the Afghan company took a significant amount of time as well because the company did not know exactly where the seeds were from either. When the wheat location was determined, CTU tried to discover how the company was planning on moving the wheat seeds. By then, it was already the middle of October.

Moving the Seeds

Moving seeds 800 kilometers in the United States would require only a phone call, a credit card, and a couple of days for transport. This was the expectation that the Coalition leaders had in their heads based on past experience and culture. In Uruzgan, CTU discovered a much different reality. The Afghan company responsible for delivering the seeds was not as concerned with the November 2010 planting dates as the Coalition was. It had not contracted the vehicles and drivers needed to move the seeds. CTU pressed the company to secure the drivers and get the seeds on the road. The road to be used led south out of Herat and then turned east toward Kandahar before heading north on Route Bear to Tarin Kowt. Most of the route was a moderately improved dirt road that had not been refurbished in decades. The ubiquitous Afghan jingle truck is a vehicle roughly the size of a dump truck that is painted in a number of vibrant colors and designs and has hundreds of chains and metal objects hanging from its sides and underneath the chassis to tamp down road dust. Securing the jingle trucks needed to transport the seeds took several weeks of constant coordination and pressure. CTU endeavored to instill a sense of urgency to make the delivery happen before the last effective planting day, after which the seeds would no longer be of any use.

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[6] The events described in this chapter are supported by numerous notes in the author's notebooks from September–November 2010. The narrative is based on the author's recollection of the events and are not specifically annotated in the notebooks.

As October turned into November and the seeds had still not shipped, CTU looked for other options to assure the completion of the mission.[7] USAID insisted on the mission being Afghan-led and Afghan-executed, but CTU was much less confident that the Afghan company would succeed in accomplishing the assignment. Security along the route between Herat and Kandahar was not improving, which caused concerns for drivers. CTU looked at a northern route between Herat and Nili, but those roads were not nearly as developed and would create a substantial risk of losing the seeds. CTU explored options for other methods of security along the route, all of which were rejected for introducing too much Coalition involvement. CTU staff suggested that the Coalition move the seeds with Boeing CH-47 Chinook transport helicopters, but they were rebuffed since this did not support the Afghan First concept. The command continued to coordinate with USAID and the U.S. Department of State, but no seeds had been shipped at the beginning of November.

No Winter Wheat Seeds

By November, CTU still had not received the winter wheat seeds. The latest planting date had passed, so even if the seeds were delivered, the wheat crop would not be successful. By insisting on a strict Afghan First–Afghan Lead concept, the Coalition set the Afghan government up for failure. The agriculture sustainment infrastructure did not exist sufficiently to purchase, move, and track the seeds. The road and transport systems were not developed to the level of maturity and capacity needed to move large shipments over hundreds of kilometers on a tight timeline. Consequently, the Afghan government was seen to have failed by a population who had been anticipating the wheat. The Afghan company was incapable of executing the mission. The Coalition had the best intentions, but it had not shown the flexibility needed to make the concept successful. As a result, the local people's mistrust of the Afghan government was reinforced and the Coalition missed an opportunity to enhance the agricultural capability in Uruzgan while pushing back against poppy production.

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[7] CTU conducted numerous discussions with USAID and U.S. State Department officials to figure out how to resolve this challenge successfully. This paragraph is based on the author's recollection of these discussions.

In March 2011, the author climbed a rickety wood ladder to the roof of the provincial governor's compound to get a view of springtime in the Uruzgan valley. The view was magnificent, but it was also terrifying and frustrating. Instead of fields of winter wheat waiting to be harvested, all the author saw were fields of red, white, and yellow poppy stretching as far as the eye could see. In the end, the Coalition had succeeded only in reinforcing the viability of poppy as a profitable cash crop.

Leadership Lessons Learned

Teammates Want to Do What Is Right

The winter wheat fiasco demonstrates that even if people are trying to do the right thing for the right reason, it is not necessarily the right time. In the case described in this chapter, USAID had a valid concept in trying to build Afghan capacity by coaching the Afghan government and local companies to deliver the wheat seeds to Uruzgan without Coalition assistance. It was the right thing to do. Unfortunately, the Afghans simply did not have the logistics and command and control capacity to execute the mission. The Coalition leadership's expectation that the Afghans could execute this mission on their own was misguided. There should have been appropriate coaching, training, and assistance provided to ensure mission success. The organizations involved in this mission meant well but failed to recognize that it simply was not going to work without bringing in available Coalition resources to achieve success. By letting the mission fail, the Coalition made the situation worse, since the Afghan government was seen as inept, further eroding trust with the local populations. The Afghans wanted to succeed. Leadership at the Coalition level should have enabled them to do so rather than let them fail.

Continuous Communication, Coordination, and Cooperation Is Needed

In a complex mission environment with multiple nations, many different funding lines, complex logistics and transportation challenges, and a tight inflexible timeline, constant communication is needed across all agencies. In the case described in this chapter, there was no one leader who was responsible for the delivery of the wheat seeds. No one took ownership and responsibility for the delivery. Even when someone knew about parts of the operation, they did not have all of the details needed to make the decisions necessary to ensure success. USAID saw the program as an internal challenge and did not want to ask for outside help. What USAID did not understand was that they did not have to deal with the aftermath of a failed program. In the eyes of the Afghan people living in Uruzgan who had been promised the wheat, their government, CTU, and the Coalition had failed to deliver on a promise.

Figure 25. Growing poppy instead of wheat

Source: courtesy of the author.

With proper communication and cooperation, decisions to cooperate may have saved the project. Had CTU been authorized to support the delivery of the seeds, the delivery may have been on time. Obligations would have been met. The provincial government would have saved face with its citizens and earned their trust. As it was, cooperation and communication were poor and decisions were made with incomplete data. In some cases, input was ignored completely. Leaders should emphasize continuous communication, coordination, and cooperation with all concerned agencies to avoid mistakes.

In this case, the Coalition should have developed a common understanding of the mission and created options to change the plan if the situation dictated. CTU was told by the U.S. Department of State that the operation was happening in Uruzgan, but it was not part of the planning process. Had CTU and USAID developed the concept together with Coalition and Afghan partners, an environment for close cooperation and communication during mission execution could have been created. The Coalition would have then been able to adapt to the circumstances and create a successful outcome for all parties.

CONCLUSION

Retirement and Reflection

Thoughts on Leading a Coalition Team

In May 2011, the author had a discussion with Combined Team Uruzgan's (CTU) command sergeant major, Australian Army warrant officer class 1 David Ashley, regarding CTU's change of command scheduled for 17 June. Ashley was adamant that it was his responsibility to handle the planning, preparation, logistics, and rehearsals required to put together a professional ceremony.[1] The author had plenty to keep him busy and gladly accepted this recommendation. Ashley also suggested that they tie in the author's retirement from the U.S. Army with the ceremony, which the author thought was a good idea. During the next month, Ashley took charge with incredible energy and professionalism. When the author tried to check in on the status of the preparations in early June, Ashley politely told him that it was not his business and that all he had to do was show up on 17 June. The author responded, "Roger that, Sergeant Major."

On the day of the ceremony, the author cleaned out the 8-by-8-by-20-foot Conex box that he had called home for the last year. He gave all his gear to his team, who took it away, telling him that they would retrieve it later. The author walked down the path from the cantonment area to a large Boeing AH-64 Apache attack helicopter repair tent, which was larger than a football field. The tent had been converted into a gym and was where Ashley had set up the joint change of command and retirement ceremony. As the author walked into the cavernous facility, nearly 1,000 soldiers and civilians from nine different countries stood at attention in formation. At the head of the formation was a raised stage with seats for the author; his replacement, Colonel Robert B. Akam; Lieutenant General David M. Rodriguez, commander of International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) Joint Command; and Major General James L. Terry, commander of ISAF Regional Command South. To stage's left was a set of bleachers for the author's teammates, to include the provincial governor of Uruzgan, Mohammad Omar Shirzad; Afghan National Police brigadier general Fazl Ahmad Sherzad; Afghan National Army brigadier general Mohammad Zafar Khan; General Aziz Zakaria; Provincial Reconstruction Team director Bernard Philip; Colonel David Smith, CTU deputy commander; and dozens of other people who had worked so hard to make Uruzgan and Daykundi Provinces better places for Afghans to live.

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[1] *Drills and Ceremonies*, TC 3-21.5 (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2021).

The change of command ceremony was conducted using the U.S. Army traditional protocol. The CTU colors were transferred from the author and Sergeant Major Ashley through Major General Terry to Colonel Akam and back to Ashley. Terry commented on the successes of CTU and the challenges that lay ahead. The author spoke next, thanking the CTU team for their incredible effort and personal sacrifice. Akam concluded the ceremony with a pledge to continue to improve the environment north of Kandahar. With the change of command complete, the ceremony transitioned directly into the author's retirement.

The retirement ceremony was conducted in traditional Australian style. The author had no idea how it was planned; Ashley simply advised him to "Go with it, Mate." The author's response, again, was "Roger that, Sergeant Major." Lieutenant General Rodriguez, who had hired the author to command CTU, opened the ceremony and spoke for about 10 minutes. The author followed with prepared remarks that he struggled to deliver, as he was overwhelmed with emotion. Looking out to the 1,000 people who had volunteered to better the lives of the Afghan people and made sacrifices to help make the world a safer place, the author realized what a special year it had been. He concluded his remarks and then followed Ashley's lead to the center of the stage. In a booming voice, reminiscent of classic sergeants major, Ashley commanded the formation to "center face." At his command, the formation opened up a corridor down the center. Ashley led the author down this corridor, and the author had the opportunity to shake the hands of most people in the formation as they crowded in to say goodbye. They emerged from the hanger about a half hour later as the corridor spilled out onto the apron of the airfield. Finally, seeing his good friends, mates, and other important people at the end of the line, the author said his last farewells. He did not know what to expect next, only that at some point he was due to fly out.

Then, the author heard in the distance his deputy commander, Colonel Smith, shout out for him to "climb in." The author walked over to the deputy's personal vehicle, a converted Dutch litter cart, which was a golf cart that had been outfitted with two litter-bearing frames used to carry patients from a helicopter to the Roll 2 hospital. The author's adjutant, Australian Army captain Jacob Kleinman; his interpreter, Dawood Alakozai; and Sergeant Major Ashley were already in the vehicle with Smith. They had reserved the right front seat for the author. As the author got into the vehicle and turned to wave to his troops, Smith took off toward the main airstrip. Out of the corner of his eye, the author saw two fire engines on either side of the apron. Before he could register what was going on, he heard four distinct pops and saw green and violet smoke envelop the road in front of the vehicle. The fire engines created an arc of water that rained down into the smoke. Smith was headed straight for the wet smokescreen. He drove through the screen, completely obscuring the crowd behind them. Passing through the smoke, all the author could see was an Australian Lockheed C-130 Hercules transport aircraft waiting at the end of the runway. The party headed for the back ramp and offloaded the stretcher cart. The author bid them farewell and climbed into the back of the aircraft. It was his last day in uniform.

As he settled into a web seat inside the aircraft, en route to Australia's Al Minhad Airbase in the United Arab Emirates, the author closed his eyes and reflected on an amazing year. It had begun with planning for the imminent Dutch departure from Afghanistan and proceeded with many leadership challenges, adventures, frustrations, and elation. At the end of the day, the author felt extremely proud of the way that CTU had coalesced as a team. The hard work and risks taken to improve conditions for the Afghan people living in Uruzgan and Daykundi Provinces had, for the most part, been met with success. There remained many monuments to ineptitude and projects and programs that had yet to be completed, but the overall situation in those provinces was vastly improved from where it had been 10 months earlier. The biggest unknown was whether or not the provinces would be able to stand on their own as the Coalition forces withdrew. No one could know. All that was known was that, in the author's opinion, as a result of CTU's time in country, Uruzgan and Daykundi were now better off.

Leadership Lessons Learned

Treat Everyone with Respect and Dignity

Team members respond when they feel that their leader respects them. By demonstrating through words and actions that they respect the people they deal with, a leader can break down barriers, improve communication, and develop a cooperative environment. Differences in cultures, training, expectations, and viewpoints are amplified in a coalition environment, but they can be better understood and overcome by treating people with respect and dignity.

Build a Culture of Trust

In a coalition environment, putting one's trust in subordinate units, staff, higher headquarters, host nation partners, and coalition partners is required to maximize performance. Trust has to be earned. It comes from personal engagement, working closely together, and holding one another accountable toward a common mission. In some cases, trust is instantaneous, while in others it requires patience and is earned over time. Often, cultural norms and differences create misconceptions regarding what it takes to build a trusted environment. For example, the author's relationship with Mohammad Omar Shirzad, one of Uruzgan's provincial governors, was built over time during many cups of tea, discussions, and engagements, while his relationships with his deputy commanders, Australian Army colonels Jason Blain, Dennis Malone, and David Smith, was almost instantaneous. The author did not select his deputies but was fortunate to have outstanding Australian officers who were well-respected by soldiers from the many nations contributing to CTU. Selecting an officer from a different nation to serve as deputy commander of CTU helped add balance and perspective to the command's leadership team. The author never completely trusted his Afghan partners, whereas he completely trusted his deputy commanders.

Respect Coalition Forces

According to Warrant Officer Ashley:

> Know the differences in your coalition force, multinational attitudes, military relationships, and variations in values and practices. "Fight" to identify those differences. Embrace those differences, work through friction with respect and courtesy, and don't expect those from different nationalities to just be versions of you. In a coalition, if we get this wrong, we will be divided and insular and not as one; and we will always be better as one. Our differences should not be a weakness, but a strength—and if we get this right, we will have a unity of spirit, attitude, and purpose. This will be a coalition that works and succeeds instead of one that risks disunity and failure.[2]

Come in Hard

Setting and enforcing high standards of performance and conduct sets the stage for high-performing units. This does not mean a leader should impose draconian measures or harsh discipline. Communicate standards and expectations clearly and continuously reinforce expectations. A leader should achieve accountability by making corrections quietly and professionally. They should lead with a positive example, as their team members will adhere to the standards they demonstrate and uphold. If a leader sacrifices high standards initially to be liked or to be popular, setting high standards later on will be tough to achieve. Communicating effectively across cultural and international organizations takes time and effort to make sure that the standards set are understood and accepted.

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[2] David Ashley, email message to author, 31 July 2023.

Take Pride in the Whole Team

Focusing effort toward a common purpose contributes to ownership of a mission and pride in accomplishment. A leader should guard against any disparity or discrimination based on cultural stereotypes and prejudices. Pride in what the whole team stands for and accomplishes should supersede any national or personal achievements.

Look for New and Better Ways to Do Things

A diverse coalition brings with it many different ideas and concepts. A leader must listen attentively and always be seeking new innovative ideas. This helps build trust while improving unit cohesion and performance.

Demonstrate and Spread a Positive Attitude

A positive attitude is infectious. Teams that are led with a positive leadership style will pull together and overcome adversity.

Possess a Tenacious Will

In a coalition environment, clearly defining the vision, mission, and intent is critical. Any established end state requires leaders with the tenacity and will to drive their organizations to success.

Trust the Wisdom Gained during Years of Service

Coalitions are composed of units representing diverse cultures, viewpoints, and national objectives. Leading in a coalition environment requires, above all, the wisdom to know how to mold a team that is focused on a unified objective and works together to accomplish the mission.

The Impact of Positive Leadership

During the year the author spent in Uruzgan, he witnessed the impact of positive leadership on effective integration of governance, development, and security in an operational coalition environment. The conditions in Uruzgan had improved under Dutch leadership from 2006 to 2010, but they were still volatile when the author arrived, with only the province's major population centers nominally secure. Logistics convoys traveling the approximately 250 kilometers from Kandahar to Tarin Kowt required combat convoys of more than 40 vehicles, which took more than 22 hours to complete and were only conducted on a biweekly basis. After 10 months of comprehensive counterinsurgency warfare under CTU, roads between the province's district centers and all major valleys were secured. The time to travel from

Figure 26. Retirement in the Australian tradition

Source: courtesy of the author.

Kandahar to Tarin Kowt had been reduced to four hours, and logistics convoys were conducted daily with little to no delays. Bazaars that had once been empty were thriving again, and local people were optimistic about their government and the future for their families. Through intensive cooperation and positive leadership, CTU worked closely with Afghan leaders and was able to all but eliminate the Taliban presence in populated areas and dramatically improve the quality of life for Afghan citizens in both cities and rural districts.

EPILOGUE

The Best-Laid Plans

Combined Team Uruzgan (CTU) followed the guidance and directives that stemmed from the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) Joint Command order, Operation Omid. These concepts followed U.S. Army counterinsurgency doctrine as codified in *Counterinsurgency*, Field Manual 3-24. Counterinsurgency doctrine involves a combination of offensive, defensive, and stability operations that units apply proportionate to the situation they face in their area of operations. Stability operations include aspects of civil security, civil control, essential services, governance, and economic and infrastructure development.[1]

CTU worked to stabilize the environment in Uruzgan Province through operations such as those described in the Tangi and Mirabad valleys. The offensive actions taken to secure the area enabled Afghan police to provide daily local security and the Afghan government to coordinate for services and development activities. Partnering with the police and removing a corrupt chief of police reduced the number of nighttime raids that the police conducted on civilian homes and improved the relationship between the police and the local population. Conducting offensive operations to eliminate Taliban sympathizers in Uruzgan created a more stable environment with increased government control, visibility, and interaction. In addition, the Afghan National Army (ANA) and Afghan National Police (ANP) expanded their operational footprint by establishing defensive bases that sustained the security gains made through these offensive actions.[2]

Once the Taliban had been pushed out of the province's population centers and rural areas between towns, the Afghan government began to meet with village elders in many small towns and villages.[3] These engagements provided an opportunity for tribal leaders to communicate specific challenges, set priorities, and coordinate for essential services, governance, and economic and infrastructure development. This close cooperation led to more than $266 million (USD) being spent on direct development projects that helped improve local infrastructure, education, healthcare, and standards of living.[4] Other programs described in this book focused on delivering on government promises to improve education, healthcare, infrastructure, and economic well-being. The fact that the overall security environment had improved dramatically helped facilitate improvement in all sectors, despite setbacks in terms of project completion, delivery of services, and capacity.

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[1] *Counterinsurgency*, Field Manual 3-24/Marine Corps Warfighting Publication 3-33.5 (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2006), 1-19.

[2] Author's maps, December 2010 and December 2011. These maps show the expansion of government influence based on the expansion of both ANA and ANP locations in each district.

[3] Author's notes and calendar, August 2010–June 2011. The calendar and corresponding notes describe in detail the multiple weekly shuras and engagements that connected the people with the provincial and district governments.

Improvements Were Made—Were They Sustainable?

As the author flew out of Tarin Kowt aboard a Lockheed C-130 Hercules transport aircraft on 17 June 2011, he believed that what CTU and its partners had accomplished in Uruzgan and Daykundi provinces could be sustained.[5] More improvements in security would be followed by better governance systems as well as fully funded and coordinated development activity, which would lead to a sustained stable environment in which conditions for local Afghans would continue to improve. However, despite discernible positive impacts brought about by the concepts outlined in the U.S. counterinsurgency doctrine, these improvements proved to be unsustainable.

After the author departed Afghanistan, U.S. Army colonel Robert B. Akam commanded CTU until 18 October 2012. At the time, the commander of ISAF Regional Command South, U.S. Army major general Robert B. Abrams, believed that Afghanistan would "stand on its own, but not alone, as the international community will be there with them."[6] On 15 December 2013, the last Australians exited Uruzgan. Australian prime minister Anthony Abbott declared, "We have seen the replacement of the Taliban, we have seen the driving out from their safe havens and bases al-Qaida and al-Qaida sympathizers." The prime minister also stated that "Uruzgan today is a very significantly different and better place than it was a decade ago" and that "if you look at the benefits for our country, Afghanistan and the wider world . . . then yes, it has been worth it—but not for a second would I under-estimate the price that has been paid by individuals and families, and the price that will continue to be paid."[7] For two and half years after the author's departure, official assessments reiterated a positive outlook for Uruzgan.

On 8 September 2016, CBS reported that the Taliban had taken control of Tarin Kowt with the exception of the residual Afghan government forces. The Afghan National Security Forces in Tarin Kowt were reinforced and supported by U.S. airstrikes that enabled them to retake Tarin Kowt, but Taliban influence had returned to Uruzgan.[8] Rule of law and governance gradually reverted to Taliban control such that by 9 February 2020, a former provincial governor of Uruzgan, Amanullah Timoori, claimed, "The sphere of the government's control has become limited, people feel frustrated, do not trust government's judicial organs and many go to settle their disputes in Taliban courts."[9]

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[4] "Uruzgan Project Overview," Provincial Reconstruction Team report, June 2011. This report was generated by the Provincial Reconstruction Team and covers physical projects that were approved for construction in Uruzgan and Daykundi provinces. This list does not include other educational and healthcare programs.

[5] Maps 2–5 in chapter 2 depict improvements in security by an increase in green shaded area and a decrease in red shaded area over time.

[6] Sgt Ashley Curtis, USA, "Combined Team Uruzgan Transitions to Australian Adviser Control," Army.mil, 24 October 2012.

[7] Katharine Murphy, "Last Australian Troops Leave Afghanistan's Uruzgan Province," *Guardian*, 15 December 2013.

The administration of U.S. president Donald J. Trump initially supported U.S. engagement in Afghanistan, though with a focus on security rather than governance or development. They agreed with the intent of previous administrations under U.S. presidents George W. Bush and Barack H. Obama on preventing Afghanistan from becoming a terrorist safe haven. The expansion of the Islamic State, the Haqqani network, and the Taliban, combined with negative influence from China, Russia, and Iran, continued to erode the security situation in Afghanistan, which hindered the Afghan government's ability to improve conditions there.[10] President Trump increased total troop strength in Afghanistan from fewer than 10,000 in 2016 to more than 15,000 in 2018.[11]

During this period, many private organizations worked with the Afghan government to capitalize on the gains made in governance, development, and security by Coalition forces. For example, the author continued his efforts to improve conditions in Afghanistan through engagement with the Afghan government in support of the "Afghanistan Reconnected" program, sponsored by the EastWest Institute. According to the institute,

> [The] Afghanistan program is striving to revitalize Afghanistan's role as a strategically-located trade and transit hub, and focuses on the regional economic aspects of its stabilization. The country's position at the crossroads of Asia lends the country the potential to connect the Indian subcontinent with Central Asia, the Middle East, and China. Integrating Afghanistan within Central and South Asia, and linking it to the rest of the world, entails creating opportunities for stability and economic security in the country and the region. By promoting energy security, transport infrastructure, trade, and investment, [the] Afghanistan Reconnected Process aims at increasing regional connectivity and facilitating the development of a common economic vision that sets political disputes aside. The Afghanistan Reconnected Process is built upon the conviction that regional economic growth is a cornerstone to long-term security and stability for both Afghanistan and its neighbors. The meetings held with political,

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[8] "Afghan Forces Flee as Taliban Militants Push into Another City," CBS News, 8 September 2016.
[9] Sayed Salahuddin, "Afghans Turn to Taliban in Forgotten Province," *Arab News*, 9 February 2020.
[10] Vanda Felbab-Brown, *President Trump's Afghanistan Policies: Hopes and Pitfalls* (Washington, DC: Brookings, 2017).
[11] "Afghanistan: What Has the Conflict Cost the U.S. and Its Allies?," BBC News, 3 September 2021.

> business, and academic leaders throughout the region as well as in the United States, Europe, and China have validated this assumption.[12]

The Trump administration began to alter its strategy in 2019 when negotiations between U.S. officials and the Taliban began, excluding the Afghan government from the talks. The result was the Doha Accord, signed on 29 February 2020. The agreement stipulated that the United States would leave Afghanistan in 14 months, while the Taliban agreed to prevent the country from becoming a safe haven for terrorist organizations and to cease attacks on U.S. forces (but not on Afghan forces). The main challenge was that there was no enforcement mechanism stipulated in the agreement. The Taliban agreed to negotiate with the Afghan government, but there was no compelling reason for them to do so. The United States was to release 5,000 Taliban prisoners in exchange for the release of 1,000 Afghan prisoners. The impact that the agreement had on the Afghan National Security Forces was dramatic in that they felt that they had been abandoned and ultimately lost their will to fight. The Doha Accord seemed to be a "surrender agreement with the Taliban," according to H. R. McMaster, President Trump's second national security adviser.[13] The Taliban briefly reduced their attacks once the agreement was signed but quickly resumed them thereafter, and within weeks of the agreement's implementation the Taliban had gained complete control of the Afghan government.

The United States gave up on its mission to help build a safe, secure, and stable Afghanistan on 30 August 2021. That day, the last U.S. military leader to leave Afghanistan boarded a Boeing C-17 Globemaster III transport aircraft at Hamid Karzai International Airport in Kabul.[14] The departure of the United States and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) from Afghanistan capped a chaotic period that began with U.S. president Joseph R. "Joe" Biden Jr.'s announcement on 8 July 2021 that "our military mission in Afghanistan will conclude on 31 August 2021."[15] On 6 August, the Taliban seized control of their first provincial capital, and on 15 August, they captured Kabul, "completing their effective takeover of the country."[16] The Taliban was in control; the U.S. counterinsurgency doctrine had failed to achieve the desired effects. All efforts to help build a trusted and stable government that could provide security, a growing economy, and essential services for its citizens had come to nothing.

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[12] "Afghanistan Reconnected," EastWest Institute, September 2016.
[13] Amber Phillips, "Trump's Deal with the Taliban, Explained," *Washington Post*, 26 August 2021.
[14] Robert Burns and Lolita C. Baldor, "Last Troops Exit Afghanistan, Ending America's Longest War," AP News, 30 August 2021.
[15] Clayton Thomas et al., *U.S. Military Withdrawal and Taliban Takeover in Afghanistan: Frequently Asked Questions* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2021), 12.
[16] Thomas et al., *U.S. Military Withdrawal and Taliban Takeover in Afghanistan*, 14.

What Happened? Why Did NATO Not Achieve Its Objectives?

NATO's withdrawal from Afghanistan and the subsequent Taliban takeover of the country was difficult for many to comprehend. Given the lives, resources, and effort that NATO had expended during 20 years, the author anticipated much better results. From his foxhole, there were several contributing factors that led to the chaotic exit from Afghanistan.

Understanding the People and Their Culture

When NATO first went into Afghanistan, the U.S. Department of State notes, it achieved the following results in the first 100 days:

- It began to destroy al-Qaeda's grip on Afghanistan by driving the Taliban from power.
- It disrupted al-Qaeda's global operations and terrorist financing networks.
- It destroyed al-Qaeda terrorist training camps.
- It helped the innocent people of Afghanistan recover from the Taliban's reign of terror.
- It helped Afghans put aside longstanding differences to form a new interim government that represents all Afghans, including women.[17]

What NATO did not anticipate was how the people of Afghanistan would react. Many of the concepts employed in Afghanistan were centered on what worked in the West—not what might prove applicable in Afghanistan. The Coalition did not understand the intricacies of a tribal culture in which elders are deeply involved with governance at the local and national levels. The Coalition advised Afghans with the best of intentions, but it coached them to build a Western-style democracy that ignored the tribal system of local governance.

External Influence

In addition to NATO's influence in Afghanistan, regional actors also contributed to the continuing disruption of Afghan progress. The Pakistan Army's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) directorate, has, by most accounts, continued to support Taliban activities in Afghanistan by providing training, direct support, and sanctuary for Taliban fighters. Bruce Riedel of the Brookings Institute writes that "Pakistani aid went far beyond sanctuary and safe haven for the [Taliban] leadership and cadres and their families—it included training, arms, experts, and help in fundraising, especially in the Gulf states."[18] This support provided by the ISI sustained the Taliban until the NATO departure from Afghanistan in August 2021 offered the opportunity to seize control of the government in Kabul.

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[17] "The Global War on Terrorism: The First 100 Days," U.S. Department of State Archive, accessed 11 November 2022.

[18] Bruce Riedel, "Pakistan's Problematic Victory in Afghanistan," Brookings, 24 August 2021.

Iran also influenced Afghanistan during this period. As Neda Bolourchi of the Center for Middle Eastern Studies at Rutgers University–New Brunswick writes, "Throughout the U.S. war in Afghanistan, Iran has maintained extensive influence on its eastern neighbor. It played both sides of the conflict, supporting the now-deposed government in Kabul while also developing ties with the Taliban."[19] Although not as direct as the ISI's influence on the Afghan government, Iranian pressure contributed to an already complicated regional political environment.

Safe haven, training, supplies, and support from regional powers helped sustain the Taliban in Afghanistan despite close cooperation between NATO and Afghan security forces. Political stability was difficult to achieve with outside influences working against potential progress. Maintaining security in remote districts of the province could be achieved on a temporary basis, but exercising long-term control was difficult since the Taliban could simply move to their safe havens, rest, refit, and prepare to reemerge at a more strategically opportune time.

In January 2007, ISAF and Pakistan established the Joint Intelligence Operations Center (JIOC) with NATO to share intelligence, operations planning, information operations, and counter-improvised explosive device (IED) information.[20] In December 2009, the author was a member of a delegation that worked to coordinate closer ties between Pakistan and NATO, which aimed at improving tactical cooperation between the Coalition and Pakistan.[21]

Expanding tactical cooperation with Pakistan to include inhibiting ISI support of the Taliban and Iranian influence in Kabul would have reduced the negative impact of regional actors. Mary Hunter writes for the Centre for Strategic and Contemporary Research that although "Pakistan has been considered a major non-NATO ally (MNNA) by the United States since 2004 when the U.S. Secretary of State, Colin Powell, sought to strengthen ties with Pakistan due to their commitment to the 'War on Terror'," Pakistan continued to support both the Taliban and NATO.[22] Resolving this dual loyalty in favor of the Afghan government would have helped eliminate obstacles to improved governance.

Afghan Political Leadership: The Impact of Corruption

In Uruzgan, corruption impacted the ability of the Afghan government to earn the

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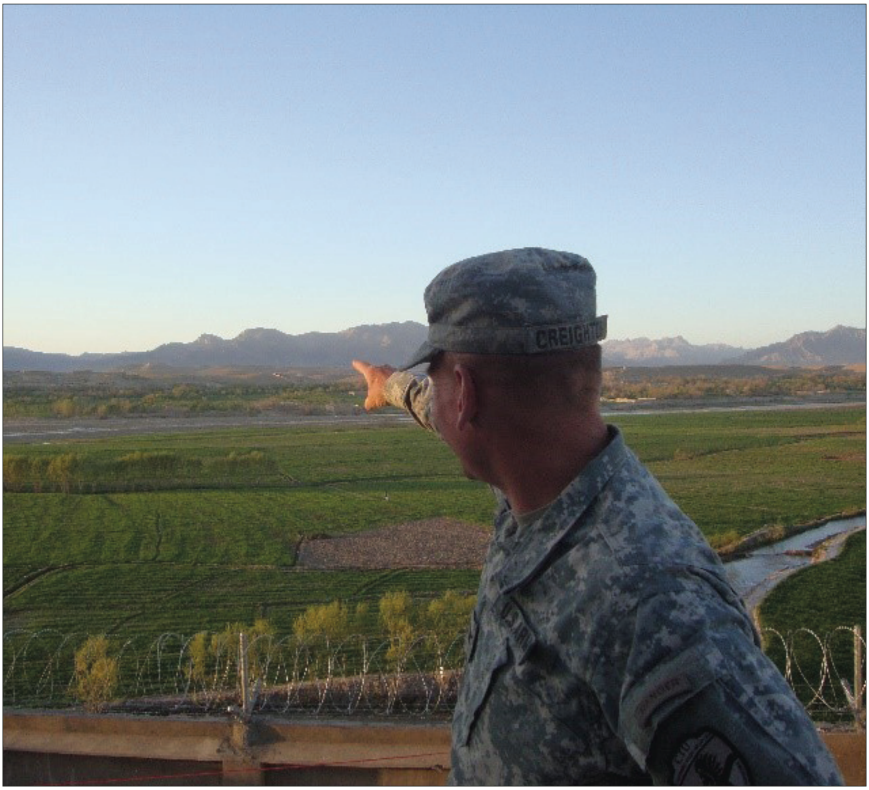
[19] Neda Bolourchi, "Iran's Strategy in Afghanistan: Pragmatic Engagement with the Taliban," New Lines Institute for Strategy and Policy, 23 September 2021.

[20] Mary Hunter, "Pakistan's Military Multilateralism: NATO, the UN and Afghanistan," Center for Strategic and Contemporary Research, 16 July 2021.

[21] Author's notes, ISAF Joint Command book 8, 5 December 2009.

[22] Hunter, "Pakistan's Military Multilateralism."

Figure 27. Fields of poppy crops seen from the provincial governor's rooftop, April 2011



Source: courtesy of the author.

trust of its people. There were many anecdotal stories of corruption that led to a general perception of mistrust and loss of faith in government. The provincial ANP commander, Brigadier General Juma Gul Hemat, was accused of expanding his tashkiel (list of authorized personnel) so that the Afghan minister of interior affairs in Kabul would send him funds to support police officers that did not actually exist, and he would keep the money. Projects such as provincial ANA and ANP headquarters compounds were paid for but never completed. The money given to contractors was never seen again. The provincial director of education, Malem Rahmatullah, was accused of both child abuse and embezzlement. He was subsequently removed from his post and sentenced to jail.[23] Based on his connections in Kabul, however, he was subsequently released.

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[23] The author personally saw the video evidence of this child abuse. Susanne Schmiedl, *The Man Who Would Be King: The Challenges to Strengthening Governance in Uruzgan* (The Hague: Netherlands Institute of International Relations, 2010), 26. This report describes the tribal leadership in Uruzgan and refers to the ouster of Malem Rahmatullah and his subsequent demotion to an advisor in the Uruzgan Department of Education. It also describes the influence that President Karzai had in Uruzgan due to tribal connections that led to his rise to power. The report does not go into detail regarding Rahmatullah's arrest and subsequent release due to his relationship with Karzai, nor does it describe the disruptive influence that Rahmattulah had as an "advisor" in the education department. Both of these subsequent actions were reported by the PRT.

Attacks along major routes between towns decreased when the local warlord Matiullah Kahn was denied security contracts. He was accused of instigating attacks to give the Coalition an incentive to hire him. The Dutch would not work with provincial governor Asadullah Hamdam due to accusations of corruption, and they coordinated with Afghan president Hamid Karzai to have him replaced in May 2010.[24] CTU dealt with these perceptions of Afghan corruption on many levels of government, development, and security. Catching the corrupt actors proved to be much more difficult than expected. The extensive perception of corruption compounded with the lack of accountability and punishment for corrupt actors ultimately hindered the government's ability to earn trust and provide basic services.

Too Much Money

According to an August 2021 report by the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR),

> By 2003, the [George W. Bush] administration had accepted that nation building was unavoidable, and by 2005 it increased reconstruction funding to more than four times what it had been in 2002. By 2004, U.S. reconstruction spending had exceeded an amount equivalent to 45 percent of Afghan GDP, the upper range of a country's theoretical absorptive capacity. While economists and aid experts dispute where this threshold lies (some estimate it to be as low as 15 percent), there is a broad consensus that aid saturation is reached at or below 45 percent of GDP. U.S. funding would remain above that threshold range for another decade.[25]

From the author's perspective, the amount of money entering Uruzgan for development programs and projects far outweighed the capacity of the province to effectively apply the funds in support of the designated programs. This discrepancy between programmed development needs and the province's ability to execute programs often made the situation worse. Mistrust between the people and the provincial government emerged when the government promised projects and programs on which they could not deliver. Corruption ensued due to the large sums of money being allocated to organizations that could not find the necessary skilled workers or materials. Workers and materials were subsequently secured from outside the province at a premium. With too many projects, oversight and quality control were sacrificed, which led to incomplete or substandard execution. Security concerns oftentimes increased when projects were started in areas controlled by the Taliban or in locations that tribal elders had not agreed to in the terms of the activities.

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[24] James Brown, "Karzai and McChrystal Visit Uruzgan," *Interpreter*, 23 March 2010.

[25] John F. Sopko, *What We Need to Learn: Lessons from Twenty Years of Afghanistan Reconstruction* (Washington, DC: Office of the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, 2021), 26. See also John F. Sopko, *Quarterly Report to the United States Congress* (Washington, DC: Office of the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, 2014), 226–27; John F. Sopko, *Private Sector Development and Economic Growth: Lessons from the U.S. Experience in Afghanistan* (Washington, DC: Office of the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, 2018), 33; Robert Lamb and Kathryn Mixon, *Rethinking Absorptive Capacity: A New Framework, Applied to Afghanistan's Police Training Program* (Lantham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield; Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2013), ix; Martin Tisné and Fredrik Galtung, "A New Approach to Postwar Reconstruction," *Journal of Democracy* 20, no. 4 (October 2009): 96–98; and John F. Sopko, *Corruption in Conflict: Lessons from the U.S. Experience in Afghanistan* (Washington, DC: Office of the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, 2016), 51. *Absorptive capacity* refers to the amount of international aid that a country can receive before it causes significant economic, social, and political disruptions and becomes counterproductive. Developing countries with fragile economies, such as those experiencing prolonged conflict, are believed to have a lower threshold for aid saturation. International aid above the absorptive capacity threshold can lead to waste, fraud, and increased corruption.

With the best of intentions, the international community opened up its purse strings to improve the quality of life for the Afghan people. In many ways, this overwhelming generosity led to unintended consequences that did not contribute to a safer and more secure Afghanistan.

Low Literacy Rates

According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the literacy rate in Afghanistan improved from 18.16 percent in 1979 to 43.02 percent in 2018, with the preponderance of improvement seen between 2011 and 2018.[26] This dramatic increase represents the commitment by the Afghan government to enhance education opportunities. Nevertheless, despite these improvements, the low literacy rates in Afghanistan contributed to challenges inherent to improving overall living conditions. Skilled laborers, teachers, healthcare professionals, government officials, security forces, and other vital workers who could read and write came from a pool of less than 50 percent of society. When workers were hired, educating and training them was more difficult because oftentimes they could not understand the written material. This lack of literacy, especially in rural areas, magnified the challenges to developing a more stable Afghan government and a vibrant economy.

Counternarcotics

On 14 April 2011, the author met with provincial leaders regarding the reintegration of eight Taliban fighters into Afghan society.[27] After the briefing, he climbed to the rooftop of governor Mohammad Omar Shirzad's house, where he had a photograph taken overlooking the poppy crops in Tarin Kowt. The sea of poppy seen in the background is indicative of the influence of this crop on rural Afghan society. The U.S. government spent nearly $9 billion (USD) on counternarcotics efforts since 2002, in part due to concerns that narcotics trafficking funded Taliban activities.[28] The United Nations estimated that the income from narcotics to the Taliban between 21 March 2011 and 20 March 2012 was approximately $400 million.[29] Had the Coalition taken a more proactive role in eliminating the Taliban's major source of income, the long-term effectiveness of the insurgents may have been reduced.[30]

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[26] "Afghanistan Rises the Literacy Rate," Countryeconomy, accessed 11 November 2022.
[27] Capt Margaret Nichols, ADF, interview with the author, 18 April 2011.

Changing Strategies and Priorities

The NATO strategy in Afghanistan continued to change based on several factors, including a more mature understanding of the situation, changing political environments in home countries, and different concepts introduced by new commanders that rotated into Afghanistan almost every year. In 2009, the Afghan Hands program was initiated by the commander of ISAF, U.S. Army general Stanley A. McChrystal, who said that military and civilian personnel deployed to Afghanistan needed to "acquire a far better understanding of Afghanistan and its people."[31] After the United States invaded Iraq in 2003, the diversion of resources from Afghanistan was dramatic. Senator John F. Kerry (D-MA) testified in Congress that "many military people complained to me at various times about the diversion of resources and of strategic thinking from Afghanistan to Iraq."[32] Rory Stewart and Gerald Knaus write, "Each new general in Afghanistan from 2002 to 2011 suggested that the situation he had inherited was dismal; implied that this was because his predecessor had had the wrong resources or strategy; and asserted that he now had the resources, strategy, and leadership to deliver a decisive year."[33] For 20 years, NATO's strategy to achieve forward progress in Afghanistan continued to change, which undermined the positive efforts achieved.

These continuing changes impacted the effectiveness of programs at the tactical level. As expressed to the author in numerous shuras in Uruzgan, Afghan leaders were not certain that they could rely on the Coalition to support them in the long run.[34] Money allocated for programs was focused on near-term success rather than long-term sustainability or capacity. Timelines for withdrawal were constantly announced and then retracted.[35] These pronouncements caused Afghan leaders at the village, district, and provincial levels to become even more skeptical of the agreements discussed. Failure to establish and abide by a consistent strategy hindered the Coalition's efforts and weakened its relationship with Afghan leaders at multiple levels. The departure of all NATO forces from Afghanistan by 30 August 2021 served to validate these doubts. President Biden claimed that he had no choice but to abide by the Doha Accord.[36] This was one of the few times that a consistent policy was followed, as he implemented the agreement concluded by President Trump. Biden could have reevaluated the situation based on a changed political landscape but instead decided to implement a flawed policy that doomed the people of Afghanistan to Taliban rule. From a leadership perspective, once Biden decided to execute Trump's plan, he owned it, success or failure. He should have taken responsibility for his decision rather than blame his predecessor's plan, for once he ordered execution, it was his plan.

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[28] John F. Sopko, *Counternarcotics: Lessons from the U.S. Experience in Afghanistan* (Washington, DC: Office of the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, 2018), 34; and John F. Sopko, *Quarterly Report to the United States Congress* (Washington, DC: Office of the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, 2021), 25. However, as SIGAR's counternarcotics lessons learned report details, the evidence connecting the Taliban to the drug trade was unclear.

[29] "Letter Dated 4 September 2012 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee Pursuant to Resolution 1988 (2011) Addressed to the President of the Security Council," United Nations Security Council, 5 September 2012, 13.

[30] John F. Sopko, *Quarterly Report to the United States Congress* (Washington, DC: Office of the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, 2014), 179; and John F. Sopko, *Afghanistan's Road Infrastructure: Sustainment Challenges and Lack of Repairs Put U.S. Investment at Risk* (Washington, DC: Office of the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, 2016), 13–15.

[31] Yochi J. Dreazen, "Afghan War Units Begin Two New Efforts," *Wall Street Journal*, 6 October 2009.

[32] *Exploring Three Strategies for Afghanistan: Hearing before the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations*, 111th Cong., 1st Sess. (16 September 2009).

[33] Rory Stewart and Gerald Knaus, *Can Intervention Work?* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2012), 50.

[34] Author's notes, 2010–11. The mistrust of NATO's long-term commitment to the people of Afghanistan was a constant refrain in shuras conducted throughout Uruzgan and Daykundi Provinces.

Decrepit Infrastructure

The author's first drive from Bagram Airbase to Kabul in August 2003 took nearly three hours to travel approximately 68 kilometers on a road that had been repeatedly bombed and cratered during decades of war. The Coalition set out to rebuild the devastated infrastructure in Afghanistan. The United States spent approximately $35 billion on reconstruction projects, education, and infrastructure such as dams and highways.[37] Despite this investment, the results were lacking. According to SIGAR, "U.S. officials sometimes made the problem worse by designing reconstruction programs without regard to the Afghan government's ability to sustain them."[38] SIGAR also found that the Afghan government was unable to fund maintenance for the roads that the Coalition constructed—and even if it had the funding, it lacked the technical capacity to do so.

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) initiated the Stability in Key Areas program, which accounted for $300 million of the total expenditure to build the capacity for subnational governance structures within contested districts. The program's governance coordinator, Gulla Jan Ahmadzai, observed:

> The program was initially planned together with the [Afghan Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development] but it wasn't well aligned with the Afghan government['s] National Priority Plans to support the main agenda of government stabilization. The program was not a government-

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[35] Sopko, *What We Need to Learn*, 23.

[36] Matthew Lee and Eric Tucker, "Was Biden Handcuffed by Trump's Taliban Deal in Doha?," AP News, 19 August 2021.

[37] "Counting the Costs of America's 20-Year War in Afghanistan," *U.S. News,* 30 April 2021.

[38] Sopko, *What We Need to Learn*, 41.

> driven approach, and [it] didn't consult the local government in the design phase of the program. . . . After the program officially closed, the activities were not [very] sustainable. . . . If the program was aligned and linked with [Afghan plans] then it would have a larger effect, since [the] government has plans to take care of [its] priorities.[39]

The Coalition failed to understand the scope of the infrastructure requirements and operating context. It did not appreciate the fact that helping build infrastructure also required creating a stable society. Unfortunately, this initiative overwhelmed the capacity of the Afghan government to execute the projects and align priorities horizontally between its ministries and vertically between the national, provincial, and district governments. Arguably, the Coalition provided too much good will too quickly. A slower, more deliberate program conducted over a longer period of time may have provided the Afghan government the opportunity to align priorities and resources more effectively.

Long-Term Commitment

The American people did not have the will to continue the United States' commitments to Afghanistan. By electing Donald Trump to the presidency in 2016 and Joe Biden as his successor in 2020, they ultimately elected two leaders who were committed to withdrawing from Afghanistan. In April 2021, former president Trump announced, "Getting out of Afghanistan is a wonderful and positive thing to do. . . . I planned to withdraw on May 1st, and we should keep as close to that schedule as possible."[40] President Biden followed through on his predecessor's plans. After the last NATO troops departed Afghanistan, the Taliban quickly seized the opportunity to take control of the country. By 15 August, the Taliban had captured Kabul.[41] On 30 August, U.S. Army major general Christopher T. Donahue, commander of the 82d Airborne Division, was the last American servicemember to leave the country.[42]

The August 2021 SIGAR report explains the challenges in fighting a long-term conflict with short-term goals and pressures:

> Predicting how long a reconstruction mission might last or how many resources it might require is a fraught exercise. Few could have predicted [that] the U.S. government would spend billions of dollars annually in Afghanistan for 20 years. Yet reconstruction estimates are not conducted in vacuums; they are driven by policymakers reflecting on what is in the

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[39] Sopko, *What We Need to Learn*, 42.

[40] Melissa Quinn, "Trump Backs Afghanistan Withdrawal, Putting Him at Odds with Some Republicans," CBS News, 19 April 2021.

[41] "War in Afghanistan," Global Conflict Tracker, Council on Foreign Relations, 4 March 2022.

[42] Saeed Ahmed, "He Is the Last American Soldier to Leave Afghanistan," NPR, 30 August 2021.

> interest of the American people. SIGAR has encountered no policymakers who think it is appropriate to be deeply involved in Afghanistan for 20 years, but a chain of decisions made by these policymakers ensured that [it] would happen.
>
> Not only did U.S. officials misjudge in good faith the time and resources required to rebuild Afghanistan, [but] they also prioritized their own political preferences for what Afghanistan's reconstruction should look like, rather than what they could realistically achieve. Early in the war, U.S. officials denied the mission resources necessary to have an impact, and implicit deadlines made the task even harder. As security deteriorated and demands on donors increased, so did pressure to demonstrate progress. U.S. officials created explicit timelines in the mistaken belief that a decision in Washington could transform the calculus of complex Afghan institutions, powerbrokers, and communities contested by the Taliban.
>
> By design, these timelines ignored conditions on the ground and forced reckless compromises in U.S. programs, creating perverse incentives to spend quickly and focus on short-term goals. Rather than reform and improve, Afghan institutions and powerbrokers found ways to co-opt the funds for their own purposes, which only worsened the problems that these programs were meant to address.
>
> By the time U.S. officials recognized that the timelines had backfired, they simply found new ways to ignore conditions on the ground. Troops and resources were drawn down in full view of the Afghan government's inability to address instability or even prevent it from worsening.[43]

The counterinsurgency strategy employed by NATO in Afghanistan required more time and resources than were ultimately granted. President Trump approved an Afghanistan withdrawal plan, and President Biden executed it in August 2021.

The Bottom Line

There is not one single answer to the question of why NATO failed to establish a stable government in Afghanistan. There was no "silver bullet" that would have changed the course of events. What was required was a long-term commitment to help the Afghan people create a stable and secure society. Afghan leaders did not capitalize on the sacrifices, generosity, and commitment provided by NATO and contributing nations. In many ways, Afghan leaders squandered the resources and opportunities provided. The Coalition could have continued to learn from its mistakes and help the Afghans achieve a more lasting peace, but that would have demanded sustained effort for decades by both NATO and Afghan leadership. Nevertheless, the cost of continuing to assist in Afghanistan would have been well worth the effort given the devastation wrought by the return of the Taliban after NATO's final departure.

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[43] Sopko, *What We Need to Learn*, 23.

APPENDIX A

U.S. Army Leadership Principles

The author uses the U.S. Army's principles of leadership as described in *Army Leadership*, Field Manual 22-100, as a basis to think about who he is as a leader.[1] He employs these leadership principles in the following way:

- Know yourself and your organization. Seek self-improvement.
- Be technically and tactically proficient. Know your job.
- Develop a sense of responsibility among your subordinates. Motivate your people to own the mission.
- Make sound and timely decisions. Understand the art of balancing patience and decisiveness.
- Set the example. Show your team what "right" looks like.
- Know your soldiers and look out for their welfare. Build trust with each member of your team.
- Keep your subordinates informed. Continuous coordination, cooperation, and communication is needed at all levels.
- Seek responsibility and take accountability for your actions. Distribute what goes right to your subordinates. Own what goes wrong yourself.
- Ensure that assigned tasks are understood, supervised, and accomplished. Delegation is essential. Know your people well enough to understand how much supervision they require.
- Build the team. Train your people as a team. Account for redundancy of knowledge in case someone is out.
- Employ your team in accordance with its capabilities. This applies to individual- as well as team-level tasks.

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[1] *Army Leadership*, FM 22-100 (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 1999), 5.

APPENDIX B

Combined Team Uruzgan Organizational Structure

Combined Team Uruzgan (CTU) consisted of soldiers and civilians from many different military units, civilian agencies, and countries. This appendix describes the organizational structure as it was pieced together in Uruzgan Province.

CTU Staff

The commander of CTU was a U.S. Army colonel, and the deputy commander was an Australian Army colonel. Eighty percent of the staff officers were Australian; they were augmented by U.S., New Zealand, and Singaporean officers and soldiers from other organizations.[1] In addition to the commander, the United States provided the chief of staff, the communications officer (J-6), and various other staff officers. Australia provided the command sergeant major, the personnel officer (J-1), the logistics officer (J-4), planning officers (J-5), the chief engineer, the fires officer, and many other critical staff positions. New Zealand provided the intelligence officer (J-2), the operations officer (J-3), and other staff positions. Singapore provided the personnel to manage an intelligence gathering cell, which produced detailed village and area analysis for CTU operations. The entire staff—officers, enlisted, and civilians—was organized for 190 personnel. The United States maintained the staff at about 90 percent of its authorized strength using soldiers borrowed primarily from the U.S. Army's 2d Armored Cavalry Regiment. The Australians filled more than 95 positions using Australian Army soldiers. The New Zealand contingent augmented the Australian positions between August 2010 and April 2011. The Singaporean soldiers were provided in addition to the CTU task organization.

Mentoring Task Force

The Mentoring Task Force (MTF) was an Australian battle group that consisted of approximately 1,200 soldiers. The MTF was augmented with additional officers to fill training and mentoring roles in the Afghan National Army's (ANA) 4th Brigade, 205th "Hero" Corps; roles in the Operational Coordination Center, Provincial (OCCP); and other roles not normally associated with a combat battle group.

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[1] CTU Staff Task Organization Chart, 11 May 2011.

U.S. Army Maneuver Battalion

A U.S. Army maneuver battalion consisting of approximately 700 soldiers was assigned to CTU with full operational control. The battalion was augmented by officers and noncommissioned officers needed to perform tasks not normally associated with a maneuver battalion, such as mentoring the provincial Afghan National Police (ANP). The 1st Squadron, 2d Armored Cavalry Regiment served from 1 August 2010 to March 2011, when it was replaced by 4th Battalion, 70th Armored Regiment. Both units were permanently stationed in Germany.

French Infantry Company

A French infantry company consisting of approximately 150 soldiers was tasked with supporting the U.S. maneuver battalion. This company was task-organized under the U.S. maneuver battalion and operated out of Camp Hadrian in Deh Rawood. It operated the patrol base at Anar Joy at the mouth of the Tangi Valley from the author's arrival in Uruzgan in the summer of 2010 until October 2010.

Provincial Reconstruction Team

The Australian Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) consisted of approximately 150 personnel commanded by an Australian civilian. It was augmented by a U.S. security element consisting of 55 soldiers commanded first by a U.S Army lieutenant colonel and then by a U.S. Navy commander in the fall of 2010. The PRT also included representatives from the Netherlands, Sweden, and Norway who provided specialized police training, governance, and development skills. Although not an organic element under CTU command, the two organizations were tightly integrated. The PRT was composed of cultural advisors, police training advisors, civil engineers, U.S. Department of State and U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) representatives, Dutch liaison officials, and other development specialists. It focused on governance and development activities as well as specialized programs such as running the ANP training center and the Afghan trades education center, which trained local citizens in plumbing, masonry, electrical wiring, and other skills.[2]

Base Support Squadron

A Royal Australian Air Force lieutenant colonel commanded the base support squadron, which consisted of base defense, housing support, messing facilities, logistics, contracting elements, airfield operations, and overall quality of life activities. The squadron consisted of the following:

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[2] 1stLt Matthew Schroff, USA, "Provincial Reconstruction Team–Uruzgan, August 2010–July 2011," Uruzgan Provincial Reconstruction Team Staff Book, July 2011.

- A U.S. Navy Role 2 hospital with 88 medical personnel, 19 emergency beds, a dental facility, and 2 emergency surgery rooms. According to Russ S. Kotwal, "Role 2, or limited hospital capability, consists of advanced damage control resuscitation and surgery provided by small, mobile, forward-positioned medical treatment facilities and surgical teams."[3]
- A U.S. Army airfield operations battalion consisting of approximately 10 soldiers who served as the control tower staff for the airfield.
- A U.S. Army logistics support element consisting of approximately 30 soldiers provided by the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) Regional Command South (RC South) logistics brigade. These soldiers provided CTU supply coordination with the RC South logistics base in Kandahar.
- One Australian and one Singaporean ScanEagle unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) elements. These platoon-size elements provided reconnaissance and surveillance capability in the vicinity of the provincial capital of Tarin Kowt.[4]
- A Singaporean counterbattery radar element consisting of approximately 21 Singaporean Army soldiers who were able to identify the location of incoming rocket and indirect fire threatening Camp Holland and the airfield.[5]
- A Slovakian security element consisting of 100 soldiers provided by the Slovakian Army. This infantry force was used solely for the defense of Camp Holland.[6]
- A U.S. Army combat engineer unit consisting of a route clearance capability as well as an explosive ordnance detachment.
- Multinational civilians and contractors supporting base operations. Many maintenance, food, and technical support capabilities were provided by hundreds of civilians contracted for their technical skills.
- An aerostat reconnaissance balloon crewed by U.S. contractors.[7]

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[3] Russ S. Kotwal, MC USA (Ret) et al., "A Review of Casualties Transported to Role 2 Medical Treatment Facilities in Afghanistan," *Military Medicine* 183, issue supplement 1 (March–April 2018): 134, https://doi.org/10.1093/milmed/usx211.

[4] "Coalition Forces: Singapore," Nautilus Institute for Security and Sustainability, 16 August 2010.

[5] "Coalition Forces: Singapore."

[6] "The Slovak Republic," North Atlantic Treaty Organization, accessed 11 November 2022.

[7] Spc Jennifer Spradlin, USA, "Aerostat Balloon Provides 'Eyes in the Sky' for Enhanced Security in Uruzgan Province," DVIDS, 7 December 2010.

APPENDIX C

Overview of Development Activities in Uruzgan

Table 1. Development programs: Afghan national development strategy

Program	Sector	Donor	Implementing Partner / Counterpart	Objectives	Status
Microfinance Investment Support Facility for Afghanistan (MISFA)	Private Sector Development	European Commission	WOCCU	To facilitate the development and growth of a long-term, strong, and healthy microfinance sector in Afghanistan that provides high-quality and efficient financial services to low-income people.	▪ 1,106 active borrowers in Uruzgan (MISFA Monthly Report, May 2010) ▪ Total loan value in Uruzgan of 55,755,009 Afghanis/USD 1,249,691 (MISFA Monthly Report, May 2010)
National Rural Access Program (NRAP)	Rural Development / Infrastructure	Multi-Donor ARTF	MRRD	The objectives of NRAP are to: ▪ Establish a quality rural road network that connects all villages to basic rural infrastructures and services, such as markets, health care, and schools. ▪ Provide increased employment opportunities through using labor-intensive methods and a private sector-led approach for all works. ▪ Enhance the capacity of communities and the private sector to manage, deliver, and maintain public transportation facilities through on-the-job capacity development.	▪ 105.47 kilometers of roads constructed or rehabilitated ▪ 106,844 labor days generated (NRAP 4th Quarter report, April 2009) AusAID has provided supplementary funding at the provincial level to increase the number of roads and bridges supported under the NRAP approach (see Australia's contributions below).

Program	Sector	Donor	Implementing Partner / Counterpart	Objectives	Status
National Solidarity Program (NSP)	Rural Development	Multi-Donor ARTF	MRRD	To strengthen community governance and rebuild the trust and confidence of the people of Afghanistan through democratically elected Community Development Councils (CDCs) who, through the use of community-managed reconstruction and development subprojects, improve their access to social and productive infrastructure and services.	▪ 315 Community Development Councils elected (National Status Report, March 2010) ▪ 73 projects completed (National Status Report, March 2010) Constraints: MRRD has been unable to identify a suitable NGO Facilitating Partner (FP) for Tarin Kowt District after the dismissal of ADA for poor performance. This has meant that a number of CDCs have been suspended and some activities have not received the level of technical support and monitoring that would be expected under the program. MRRD's Provincial Project Management Unit (PMU) has received additional staff to take on the FP role in an attempt to maintain the CDCs that have already been established under the current phase.
Basic Package of Health Services (BPHS)	Health	European Commission	MOPH / AHDS	To improve access to primary health care in Afghanistan.	▪ 12 basic health centers rehabilitated (Uruzgan BPHS Draft Report, December 2009) ▪ 165 health posts established (Uruzgan BPHS Draft Report, December 2009) ▪ 329 health staff working in province ▪ 84 female health workers
Education Quality Improvement Project (EQUIP)	Education	European Commission	MOE	▪ To strengthen the capacity of schools and communities to manage teaching and learning activities; ▪ To invest in human resources (teachers, principals, and educational administration personnel) and physical facilities; and ▪ To reinforce the capacity of schools, district education departments, provincial education departments, and the Ministry of Education.	▪ 16 schools completed ▪ 56 schools under construction ▪ 1,526 teachers in province ▪ 43,000 children registered in primary school

Source: *Comprehensive Needs Assessment for Uruzgan Province, Afghanistan: Final Report* (Canberra: Australian Agency for International Development, 2010), adapted by MCUP.

Table 2. Development programs: Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID)

Program	Sector	Donor	Implementing Partner / Counterpart	Objectives	Status
Civil Service Internships (Pilot)	Governance/ Capacity Building	USD 225,630 2009 – ongoing	UNDP/ Afghan Civil Service Commission	To address the serious staffing shortfall in Uruzgan's civil service by providing a cadre of high-school leavers trained in public administration.	50 high-school graduates have been selected and are undertaking intensive six-month training before placement in key line departments for further on-the-job training and eventual employment. Risk: Placement and retention of interns on completion of training. The capacity of the Civil Service Commission at the provincial level is also very weak with reliance on the regional office in Kandahar for project oversight. The recent mobilization of a UNDP—Afghan Subnational Governance Program adviser at the provincial UNAMA office will support implementation. AusAID is also looking at providing some complementary support in partnership with GTZ through expansion of their capacity development component under UPDP for 2011.
Aga Khan Foundation: Capacity Development Component (Pilot)	Governance/ Capacity Building	USD 75,000 25,000 per year 2009–12	Aga Khan Foundation	Improved capacity of key line departments (such as Agriculture and Rural Development) in the delivery of essential services through training and exposure to best practice examples and lessons learned from more developed provinces.	AKF has commenced training and exposure visits for representatives in the Department of Agriculture, Women's Affairs, and Reconstruction & Rural Development to share lessons learned and experience in some of the more developed provinces (e.g., Bamayan, Takhar, and Pawan). ▪ Five Department of Agriculture technical officers have participated in an Integrated Crop Management Seminar in Takhar Province. ▪ Five Department of Rural Rehabilitation & Development technical officers have undertaken exposure visits to share best practice examples of community-led development through the National Solidarity Program.

Program	Sector	Donor	Implementing Partner / Counterpart	Objectives	Status
School Health Education (SHE)	Health	Pilot Phase USD 124,688 2008–09	Save the Children & Afghan Health Development Services / Ministry of Public Health & Education	To provide health and hygiene education support to selected schools in Uruzgan Province in Afghanistan. The project will improve health and hygiene of school children and detect those children with underlying illnesses that require further medical attention.	Main achievements from the pilot include: ▪ 1,780 (34% girls) primary school students given access to basic health and hygiene education across four schools in Tarin Kowt District; ▪ workshops for 1,334 parents, teachers and government officials to discuss approaches to improve the health situation of children; ▪ establishment of a health screening protocol and referral system between the four formal schools and health facilities; ▪ the extension of health screening services to out–of–school children; ▪ and the development and implementation of a hygiene and health curriculum for children. The current phase builds on the success of the pilot, expanding to another 8 schools (covering 5,755 students) in Tarin Kowt and Chora Districts.
		2nd Phase AUD 500,000 2010–11			
Rural Access Development (RAD) - Tarin Kowt	Rural Development/ Infrastructure	Activity 1 USD 285,125 April 2009– February 2010 Activity 2 USD 258,695 2009–10	UNOPS / Ministry of Reconstruction & Rural Development	Project objectives are: 1. to improve access to services, with reduced travel times and roads that are passable all year round; 2. employment generation for surrounding communities targeting the poorest and most vulnerable in the community; 3. to strengthen the capacity of the Provincial Department of Reconstruction and Rural Development in delivering rural infrastructure.	Activity 1: community rehabilitation of 6 kilometers of road between Safidkar and Aabroddeh villages, creating 17,397 labor days of employment for vulnerable members of the surrounding community. Activity 2: community implemented paving of a 1.5-kilometer rural approach road connecting Charmgar village to Tarin Kowt Hospital Bridge has commenced. The road will benefit 12,000 people living in the catchment area by reducing travel times to the city from one hour to 20 minutes. Both activities have supported the secondment of an Engineer from UNOPS for the Department of Reconstruction and Rural Development and employment of an Environment & Social Management assistant for improved rural infrastructure delivery.

Program	Sector	Donor	Implementing Partner / Counterpart	Objectives	Status
Department of Energy & Water (DEW) Support Activity	Water	Phase 1 USD 350,000 2008–09	GRM (DAFA) / Ministry of Energy and Water	To build the capacity of key staff in the Department of Energy and Water, to provide supplementary expertise, and to facilitate the implementation of small activities for improved service delivery for local communities.	Achievements include: ▪ Completion of a water resource study to improve water resource management in the Province. ▪ 65 Mirab (community managers of irrigation systems) have been trained in basic water management principles. ▪ Secondment of an officer from the Ministry of Energy and Water in Kabul to act as the deputy for DEW. ▪ Provincial director and his deputy attended two months' training in water resource management techniques in India. ▪ DEW managed construction of flood control structures utilizing community labour and local techniques. ▪ DEW managed canal and Karez rehabilitation for improved irrigation. ▪ Construction of HEPPs in Alahquli and Spin Kacha Villages. ▪ Procurement of essential equipment such as motorbikes, computers, water pumps, gabion baskets, etc.
		Phase 2 USD 150,000 2009 onwards			

Program	Sector	Donor	Implementing Partner / Counterpart	Objectives	Status
FAO Emergency Rehabilitation Program: Animal Feed Distribution	Agriculture	Around USD 200,000 out of a total of USD 640,000 January 2009–December 2010	FAO / ADA	To protect the livelihoods of vulnerable livestock holders in drought-affected areas though the provision of animal feed (around 620 tonnes to 3,100 livestock holders) in Uruzgan and Faryab provinces in Afghanistan.	Distribution in Uruzgan: • 110 tonnes of feed for 550 vulnerable livestock holders in Tarin Kowt District; and • 110 tonnes of feed for 550 vulnerable livestock holders in Dehrawud. Remaining distribution were undertaken in Faryab province.
Trade Training School Procurement Support	Education and Training	AUD 100,000 2009–10	ADF	Support to ADF efforts to provide employment opportunities for youth in Tarin Kowt.	Procurement of tools for courses and equipment to facilitate training in trade skills such as carpentry, plumbing, and construction. Over 2,000 students have completed courses to date.
World Food Program	Humanitarian	Est AUD 5 million for 2008–09	Food for Work: Mrrd with support of local NGO partners, ANCC & ARPD School Feeding: Ministry of Education Food for Health: Ministry of Public Health with support of AHDS	Improved food security in Afghanistan through Food for Work, Food for Education, Food for Health and Food Relief for IDPs, widows, etc.	In 2009, 4,703 metric tonnes of food was distributed to over 160,000 beneficiaries across Uruzgan. This included: • 2,154 metric tonnes of wheat in support of food for work programs, mobilizing 72,166 people to undertake small–scale infrastructure projects for the benefit of the community; and • Over 44,000 metric tonnes of food for 25,000 students, including additional 'take–home' rations for around 3,000 female students to encourage their parents to send them to school. AusAID has made to a further contribution to WFP's national program of AUD 6 million at the end of 2009–10 with a focus on Uruzgan. However, it is anticipated that there will be a smaller Uruzgan allocation than previous years based on the improved food situation, the risk of corruption, insecurity, and the low capacity of NGO partners in the province.

Program	Sector	Donor	Implementing Partner / Counterpart	Objectives	Status
The Asia Foundation Public Outreach and Civic Education Assistance for Afghanistan	Governance	AUD 3,000,000 December 2008–August 2009	TAF / ACSF	The project aims to: • Provide potential Afghan voters with accurate, culturally sensitive, and timely information; • Promote a positive social attitude toward community involvement and electoral democracy with an understanding of the critical link between voting and representation; • Encourage the participation of Afghans in the electoral process, particularly women, minorities, and marginalized groups; and • Encourage community stakeholders and other influential individuals to convey messages to members of their community (multiplier effect).	TAF conducted 87 civic education sessions, reaching 1,814 participants across three districts in Uruzgan. An election workshop was also held for 35 women including local government officials and teachers to promote voting rights and increase female participation in the elections.
UNDP Enhancing Legal and Electoral Capacity for Tomorrow (ELECT) project	Governance	AUD 6,000,000 nationally. December 2008–August 2009	AIEC/UNDP	Supporting the Afghanistan Independent Elections Commission's voter registration process and to ensure broad and equitable participation of all Afghans in the elections.	Funding supported the establishment of an Electoral Complaints Commission office in Uruzgan which supported improved transparency in relation to elections, with a number of complaints registered in Kabul. Uruzgan was the only province in Afghanistan to have all 49 planned polling stations open on the day.

Program	Sector	Donor	Implementing Partner / Counterpart	Objectives	Status
Core funding for Afghanistan's Independent Human Rights Commission	Governance	2.5 million 2006–07 to 2009–10	AIHRC	The AIHRC is an independent body enshrined in the Constitution, with five objectives: ▪ Monitoring the human rights situation in the country; ▪ Promoting and protecting human rights; ▪ Monitoring the situation of people's access to their fundamental human rights and freedoms; ▪ Investigating and verifying cases of human rights violations; and ▪ Taking measures for improvement and promotion of human rights.	Funding has contributed to the establishment of a Provincial Human Rights Commission Office in Uruzgan that is engaged in monitoring human rights in the province (including in detainee management, settlement of claims, and ANSF) and the promotion of human rights through education.
Contribution ICRC	Health / Humanitarian	AUD 20.2 million nationally March 2008–now	ICRC / AFGHAN Red Cres	Provision of emergency medical care in remote and conflict affected areas (part of a wider program with Uruzgan components).	There is low visibility on ICRC activities in Uruzgan. However, this will improve with the establishment of a permanent ICRC office in the province. Emergency medical care is being provided through health posts but there is some concern that this is duplicating BPHS.
MACCA	Humanitarian	2007–08 5 million 2008–09 5 million 2009–10 5 million	UNMACA, ARC, MoE, Mine Dog Detection Centre (MDC), Demining Agency for Afghanistan	Supports community-led clearance of explosive remnants of war in Uruzgan and border region with Pakistan; Mine Risk Education (MRE) for local communities and in schools; and victim assistance.	Achievements in Uruzgan: ▪ training of 117 local people for demining activities; and ▪ clearance of more than 200,000 square meters of contaminated land.
ADF Works Section Reconstruction Program	Infrastructure	Around USD 10 million per year	Use of local construction companies under ADF supervision	To provide infrastructure improvements in support of essential service delivery for the people of Afghanistan.	ADF-supported infrastructure includes: refurbishment of the Provincial Hospital; refurbishment and construction of district health centers; construction of the boys primary and high schools; refurbishment of the MRRD and MEW provincial offices; construction of Cottwal Crossing.

Source: *Comprehensive Needs Assessment for Uruzgan Province, Afghanistan: Final Report* (Canberra: Australian Agency for International Development, 2010), adapted by MCUP.

Table 3. Development programs: Netherlands

Program	Sector	Donor	Implementing Partner / Counterpart	Objectives	Status
Uruzgan Province Development Program (UPDP)	Infrastructure and Rural Development	EUR 34 million 30 June 2011	GTZ	Contribution to stability, capacity building, and economic growth in Uruzgan, with the main investment being the construction of a road from Tarin Kowtto Chora.	Constraints: Security has been a major impediment to road construction, leading to a number of delays and questions on whether the road can be safely constructed through the Baluchi valley. Future: AusAID is in consultation with NLD and GTZ to expand UPDP's capacity-building component, with AusAID funds from January 2011. This will provide the opportunity to develop a comprehensive capacity development approach, with complementary support for nationally funded programs such as the US ACCS and UNDP's NIBP.
Dutch Consortium of Uruzgan	Rural Development Education Child Protection Health Capacity Development	EUR 14 million 2008–14	Save, DCA, ZOA, Healthnet—TPO, CordAID	The Consortium draws on the experience of five NGOs to improve education (Save the Children), develop rural areas (Cordaid), improve health care (HealthNet-TPO), supply drinking water (ZOA Refugee Care), and provide veterinary services (Dutch Committee for Afghanistan). The Five NGOs are partnering with 11 local NGO partners to strengthen their capacity and deliver essential services to the people of Uruzgan.	Future: the DCU will continue beyond the Dutch withdrawal. The question will be what activities will continue beyond 2014 and what support arrangements will be put in place for in-extremis support.
Afghanistan Sub-National Governance Program (ASGP)	Governance	Euro 6 million 2008–12	IDLG / UNDP	The Netherlands is funding an ASGP pilot in Uruzgan that will support the rollout of the Sub-National Governance Policy.	An ASGP adviser has been mobilized in Uruzgan to support program implementation. Sectoral advisers have been selected to strengthen the Office of the Governor, with planned support at the District level.

Program	Sector	Donor	Implementing Partner / Counterpart	Objectives	Status
National Area-Based Development Programme Phase III	Infrastructure & Natural Resources	EUR 10.5 million 2009–12	MRRD / UNDP	A joint initiative between MRRD and UNDP, this program works through the District Development Assemblies (DDAs) to strengthen local governance and deliver rural infrastructure and promote economic livelihoods.	Activities include farm-to-market roads, irrigation works, food storage facilities, and local markets. Constraints: There has been some concern over government interference in the program, with efforts to verify the infrastructure that has been delivered and that funds are being managed appropriately.
BPHS Complementary Support (Infrastructure & Medical Equipment)	Health	2.3 million Euro July 2007–2010	AHDS	Support to Uruzgan basic package of health services (construction of 9 BHCs and 3 sub-centers, medical equipment, and medicine).	Constraints: provision of complementary support indicates that the BPHS is not sufficient for health delivery needs in Uruzgan, especially around building and equipment maintenance. Future: AusAID is currently considering a proposal from AHDS to provide ongoing support, including operational costs for six AHDS clinics, essential medical equipment, and medicines. Further effort is required to address the longer-term maintenance of health facilities and equipment in Uruzgan.
EQUIP Complementary Support (School Construction)	Education	EUR 5.3 million	Save the Children Fund	Additional funding in support of EQUIP objectives. Supports: the construction of 30 schools; provision of furniture for 60 schools; construction of 100 perimeter walls: construction of teacher resource centres; scholarship programmes to train new teachers.	Constraints: this activity emerged in response to the slow implementation of the EQUIP program, with delays in the release of funds from Kabul to the provincial level and allegations of corruption within Uruzgan's Department of Education. The provision of qualified teachers continues to be a critical impediment to education delivery. Scholarships are provided to India and there are concerns about the willingness of participants to return to Uruzgan after receiving the qualification and difficulties in attracting females. Future: AusAID is in consultation with SCF and the NLD on possible supplemental funding (USD 2 million) to complete the program of school construction, including five new schools, a teacher resource center, well and surrounding wall construction, and furniture procurement.

Program	Sector	Donor	Implementing Partner / Counterpart	Objectives	Status
Quality Primary Education Project (QPEP)	Education	EUR 2.7 million March 2008 to ???	Save the Children Fund	Informal education, aimed at returning children that have fallen out of school back into the formal education system through the provision of an accelerated learning program.	130 accelerated learning classes have been established, providing education for 3,671 pupils, including 956 girls.
Purchase and Distribution of Fruit Trees	Agriculture	???	FAO / AHDS	Food diversification for alternative livelihoods.	Distribution of 500,000 fruit trees (mainly almonds), including a program of workshops to improve orchard management and control pests and diseases in the province.
Purchase and Distrubution of Wheat Seed and Fertiliser	Agriculture	Phase 1: EUR 3.9 million Phase 2: ???	FAO, in partnership with AHDS, ANCC and ADA	To support improved food security of vulnerable farming families in Uruzgan through diversification of agricultural livelihoods. This involved the distribution of seed, fertilizer and poultry to 8,000 vulnerable families that have been identified by Community Development Councils.	The first phase experienced difficulties in the timely distribution of wheat and fertilizer to some of the more remote and insecure areas of Uruzgan. The new phase focuses on more permissive areas where gains can be clearly demonstrated, including a focus on improved farming techniques and the introduction of quality high yield seeds to improve production.

Program	Sector	Donor	Implementing Partner / Counterpart	Objectives	Status
Saffron Production and Other Agricultural Inputs	Agriculture	????	Blue Green World	Promotion of saffron farming as a viable agricultural product for export in Uruzgan. Also includes small-scale agriculture inputs such as saffron seeds, poultry, fruit trees, and fertilizer distribution.	Quality saffron is being produced and good prices per kilo (between USD 2,000 and 3,000) are being received. Harvests also increase over time. A new project proposal is being considered by the Hague, which would include sowing 60 hectares in Tarin Kowt.
Flight Connections to Uruzgan	Transport Subsidies	EUR 2.3 million 2009–10	KAMAIR	Subsidies provided to KAMAIR flights to facilitate transport to and from the province, especially for NGOs and other implementing partners who rely on air transport to undertake their operations.	NLD will conduct a feasibility study prior to May 2011 to determine if continued subsidizing is required or whether KAMAIR is economically viable. NLD requested Australian assistance to facilitate KAMAIR access to MNB-TK.
Tarin Kowt TVET School Building and Construction of a Civilian Terminal	Infrastructure / Education	EUR 23.2 December 2010–potentially extended to May 2011	GTZ (NLD/ Germany MoU)	Partnership between Germany and the Netherlands to advance reconstruction in southern Afghanistan. Two vocational schools (one in Kandahar and one in Uruzgan) are to provide young people with new opportunities, while an airport is to be upgraded to handle civilian flights.	There is very little infrastructure for handling civilian flights in Tarin Kowt. For instance, the airport needs a terminal building and a hangar, technical equipment, an access road, as well as a link between the runway and passenger facilities.

Program	Sector	Donor	Implementing Partner / Counterpart	Objectives	Status
TVET School (under the German-NLD MOU)	Education	EUR 2. 7 million	GTZ/NLD	The aim is to provide effective instruction and training for students from Tarin Kowt and the surrounding area. The focus will be on practical, technical training and on preparing.	AusAID has been in close consultation with GTZ to integrate informal training into the TVET school, which will allow for the transition of the ADF run Trade Training School into a government institution.
Provincial Tribal and Conflict Analysis			AREU, CAPS, TLO	Field studies on conflict and tribal dynamics in specified areas.	
Water Management Assessment			Study planned to be finalised in November 2010		The Dutch are conducting an integrated water resource inventory and formulating an Integrated Water Resource Management Plan for Uruzgan with all stakeholders involved. The Dutch intention is not to support activities identified in the assessment.
Media Support	Stabilization			Saba Media Organisation, Supporting the Stabilization Process in Uruzgan Province. Installation of five FM radio transceiver stations in the districts, 24-hour broadcasting, permanent team with equipment in Tarin Kowt, and network of local correspondents.	
Contribution to the Law and Order Trust Fund	Law & Justice	USD 55.2 million as of January 2010	UNDP	The Trust Fund supports the Afghan police, including paying salaries and funding equipment.	

Program	Sector	Donor	Implementing Partner / Counterpart	Objectives	Status
Afghan National Police (ANP) Provincial Training Centre	Security / Law & Justice	unknown		To provide operational costs for the PTC following on from construction of the centre within Multi-National Base Tarin Kowt.	Future: the PTC has been an ongoing issue with poor construction and ongoing maintenance requirements. The Netherlands has been providing funding for running costs and the AFP has been in discussion regarding the management of the center after the Dutch withdraw.
Uruzgan Economic Development Fund	Private Sector Development	30 September 2010	multiple	Entrepreneurs able to apply for small grants.	NLD will decide whether to continue this activity.

Source: *Comprehensive Needs Assessment for Uruzgan Province, Afghanistan: Final Report* (Canberra: Australian Agency for International Development, 2010), adapted by MCUP.

Table 4. Development programs: U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)

Program	Sector	Donor	Implementing Partner / Counterpart	Objectives	Status
Afghanistan Municipal Strengthening Program	Governance	National Program Uruzgan allocation unknown.	Inter-city Municipal Management Association (ICMA)	AMSP provides capacity-building assistance and resources to provincial municipalities. The program aims to improve the ability of mayors and municipalities to provide essential public services such as water and power management, sanitation, safe roads, parks, solid waste management, ditch cleaning, youth activities, and parks and urban greenery.	A new $50-million program by the project name of RAMP UP was due to begin in August 2010. A planning session will take place to determine whether this can expand to the districts of Deh Rawud and Chora.
Strategic Provincial Roads Program	Infrastructure	November 2007–December 2011	International Relief and Development (IRD)	IRD is currently working on one of three planned roads for the province. These include: ▪ Chora District Center to Gizab District Center (91 kilometers)-(suspended) ▪ Tarin Kot to Khas Uruzgan District Center (108 kilometers)-(suspended) ▪ Khas Uruzgan District Center to Malestan (into Ghazni - 80 kilometers) (suspended)	Constraints: the three proposed roads have been suspended due to insecurity and difficulties in brokering appropriate security arrangements.
Alternative Development Program - South	Agriculture	March 2008–2011	Associates for Rural Development (ARD) / The Liaison Office	ARD works through its Afghan implementing partner The Liaison Office (TLO, formerly known as Tribal Liaison Office) to increase agricultural output and improve value chain development (access to markets, cold storage).	A new program will take its place April 2011.
Afghan Civil Service Support (ACCS) Program	Governance	USD 80 million nation wide Uruzgan budget unknown	Deloitte Independent Administrative Reform and Civil Service Commission (IARCSC)	Replacing USAID's Capacity Development Program, ACSS is a national initiative designed to raise the skill levels of the Afghan civil service. ACSS focuses on five functional areas: financial management, project management, human resource management, procurement, and policy/strategic planning.	Initial consultations have been held in Uruzgan but there have been delays in implementation beyond retaining three adviser positions from the previous CDP. The new approach relies on IARCSC to provide strategic direction, which has led to a number of delays, with work being carried out at the national level before a provincial rollout. Uruzgan is likely to be of a low priority. However, there has been some discussion around providing some complementary support (such as through the construction of a Civil Service Training Centre) to facilitate mobilization in the province.

Program	Sector	Donor	Implementing Partner / Counterpart	Objectives	Status
Performance Based Governors Fund	Governance	USD 300,000 per province per year	The Asia Foundation	The PBGF aims to empower provincial governors by providing them with operational budgets to enhance their relationships with citizens and improve their overall management capacity. The PBGF Pilot will 1) provide provincial governors with operational resources; 2) provide provincial administrations with the incentives to improve planning, budgeting, and auditing capacity; 3) introduce new elements of the subnational governance policy, including a bottom-up budgeting process and a revised set of roles and responsibilities at the subnational level; and 4) form the basis for a long-term performance-based program for provincial governors.	The program creates a baseline annual fund with an initial value of US $300,000 per province per year (US $25,000 per month on average). Provincial governors' performance is measured quarterly by a steering committee made up of representatives from the Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG), donors, and the implementing partner (The Asia Foundation). This fund is available in Uruzgan.
Local Governance, Community Development	Rural Development	The budget for Uruzgan is $1.2 million	Development Alternatives International	LGCD is designed to provide innovative interventions that respond to the unique needs of individual communities. All subprojects are prepared from a provincial workplan that includes a provincial strategy and subproject portfolio unique to that province. LGCD is USAID's bottom-up community development program, where all subprojects are created at the provincial level.	A new program will take its place in April 2011.

Program	Sector	Donor	Implementing Partner / Counterpart	Objectives	Status
Food Insecurity Response for Urban Populations	Rural Development & Infrastructure	USD 4 million has been spent in Uruzgan to date	Central Asia Development Group (CADG)	This program focuses on short-term income generation. It was designed to increase income and food access for those urban and peri-urban residents who have been especially hard-hit by the global food crisis and rising cost of living in Afghanistan during the last two years.	A follow-on program will take its place in September 2010.
Afghan Citizen Assistance Program	Relief	April 2007–2010	International Organization for Migration (IOM)	Supports Afghan families and communities that have suffered losses from U.S. and Coalition military operations. ACAP provides customized aid, including home rehabilitation and construction, medical care, and vocational and business training, especially for those families who have lost a primary income earner.	
Bridge Construction	Infrastructure	USD 15 million	Louis Berger Group	To help improve security and economic development by constructing two major bridges in the remote district of Chahar Chineh bordering Helmand, connecting the district with the rest of the province.	Expected completion in August 2011.
Basic Education MOE	Education	March 2007–June 2011	Partnership with DANIDA	This tripartite collaboration between the U.S. Government (USG), DANIDA, and the Ministry of Basic Education will help ensure that all Afghan students in primary schools have better access to quality education. As in the previous agreement, DANIDA will ensure that no USG funds are used for the printing of religious textbooks.	An estimated 26 million new textbooks will be printed for grades 1–6 based on MOE curriculum to be distributed nationally, including Uruzgan Province.

Program	Sector	Donor	Implementing Partner / Counterpart	Objectives	Status
Afghanistan Small and Medium Enterprise Development (ASMED)	Economic Growth	October 2006–2011	Development Alternatives INC (DAI)	ASMED provides a wide range of business development services to encourage the establishment and growth of small and medium enterprises (SMEs).	National program, including Uruzgan Province. Need to confirm with USAID representative the extent of activities in the province.
Consortium for Electoral and Political Process Strengthening (CEPPS)	Democracy & Gov	March 2003–June 2011	Consortium of Elections, Public Policy Service	The program aims to increase broadbased participation in the electoral process, including at the subnational level. It is implemented by the Consortium for Electoral and Political Process Strengthening (CEPPS), comprising the International Foundation for Elections Systems, the International Republican Institute, and the National Democratic Institute.	National program, including Uruzgan Province. Need to confirm with USAID representative the extent of (CEPPS) Foundation for Elections Systems activities in the province.
Rural Finance and Cooperative Development (RUFCOD)	Economic Growth	December 2009–December 2012	WOCCU	USAID is supporting WOCCU to establish a network of credit unions that are Sharia-compliant (known in Afghanistan as Islamic Investment and Finance Cooperatives, or IIFCs), owned and operated by Afghans, and whose management and financing products have been adapted to the culturally and religiously conservative rural areas of Afghanistan.	National program, including Chora in Uruzgan Province. Need to confirm with USAID representative the extent of activities in the province.

Source: *Comprehensive Needs Assessment for Uruzgan Province, Afghanistan: Final Report* (Canberra: Australian Agency for International Development, 2010), adapted by MCUP.

APPENDIX D
Lessons Learned in Counterinsurgency, 2010–2011

The war in Afghanistan was a tough fight, and there was no single solution for all the problems present there. Combined Team Uruzgan (CTU) made significant strides by building solid relationships and continuing to press on all fronts every day. Throughout this book, the author has endeavored to highlight coalition leadership lessons learned by describing incidents in which these lessons were either exceptionally valuable or in which failure to adhere to these lessons caused exquisite pain. In this appendix, the author has consolidated some of the lessons that he believes are most relevant.

Priorities: Governance, Development, and Security

- It is important to work with the host government to define what success looks like and mentor the government to communicate that vision to its people.
- People need to trust their own government for any counterinsurgency campaign to be successful. The function of the Coalition is to help the host nation succeed; the Coalition cannot accomplish the mission of the host nation alone. Leaders need to balance the operational imperative to get the mission done verses the essential need to build host nation capacity and confidence.
- People will back who they see as the winner. Coalition leaders should seek to help the host government be perceived by their people as the winners. Give the host government the credit when things go right and help reduce negative impact when things do not go right.
- Too much development is not good. It is more important to finish what has already been promised than to begin a series of new initiatives regardless of how good they may seem.
- Understanding what promises have already been made demands attention to detail and diligence. Sorting out the many versions of every story complicates the situation. What works well in one village might fail in another. Consequently, development plans must be created with knowledgeable local stakeholders. The local capacity to improve conditions will be constrained by labor, supply, and supervision capacity even if the cost of the program is feasible.

- Development is critical but has to be host nation-led, well-coordinated, and consistent with local leadership priorities. To be effective, development requires follow-through and quality control. It is always better to underpromise and overdeliver. Never offer anything that cannot be given.
- Security efforts have to be host nation-led. The Coalition should coach host nation security forces from behind by helping develop the plan and advising them during operational execution. Security comes when people trust their government. The first face of the government is its national security forces. Only conduct operations at the tempo that can be successfully attained. Mentor the development of simple plans that demonstrate clear successes for local security forces, as this will in turn build self-confidence and local trust in the government.
- Security success can only be achieved if the nation's security forces—and its broader government—earn the active support of the local population.

Leadership in Coalitions

- The role of a coalition is at constant risk of being blurred. There are many confusing and conflicting signals received by Coalition members from national commands, the media, and other sources. Regularly communicate the role of the Coalition and mission across the entire force.
- National command caveats and external national influence are often overstated and misunderstood. National authorities often hamper operational outcomes if they are not properly coordinated or are poorly understood. A coalition leader must establish unambiguous command and control relationships, understand national restrictions and caveats, and then lead the force with the full extent and confidence of their operational authority. Be bold when dealing with other nations. Maximize their contribution based on the limits of their caveats. Work to be a good military commander, not an amateur politician—you will ultimately be respected for it. Maintaining a respectful attitude toward all partner nations and building solid relationships with partner nations is crucial. In difficult periods such as mass casualties and extreme conditions, close relationships with national leaders help overcome the challenges present. Invest heavily in sincere relationships with partner nations early and quickly establish a "one team" culture in which nationality is second to the mission and the deployed formation.
- In a coalition environment, and especially in a counterinsurgency environment, soldiers are placed in dangerous situations in which they are

working with host nation soldiers who occasionally attack them. Coalition leaders need to prepare for these instances and develop plans to react appropriately. Soldiers must be protected from rogue host nation soldiers while the mission continues.

- A leader should let subordinates take the initiative and use their imagination. Resource them properly as they operate in remote areas away from the flagpole.
- Patience and a positive attitude are vital in a coalition environment. Each contributing nation has its own culture, level of training, and mode of operations. Patience and a positive attitude will help bring these different cultures together into one team.
- Do not use acronyms, as they are not universally understood across Coalition formations.

Information Requirements

- A complete understanding of the operating environment is required. Leaders can rely on a variety of sources, such as national intelligence, civilian and military organizational contacts, media, digital networks, and continuous engagement with the local people and their leaders. Keep digging for more information. There is always more to the story or another perspective that will help improve operations.
- Do not overclassify information. Think in terms of “need to share,” not “need to know.”
- Commanders must immerse themselves in the human terrain and become part of the local flow of life. Most conflicts are historical, tribal, feudal, or personal. Do not leave this understanding up to “experts” within the force or civilians within the formation. Be a part of the community. Use government meetings, social and cultural activities, sports, the local economy, teaching in the schools, and any other way one can be involved to better understand the local environment.
- Explore multiple levels of understanding when talking to partners. Many local leaders will have complex histories with each other. They will have fought battles, conducted business, and have family relationships and other associations that will influence how they act. Comprehending the depth and breadth of these relationships helps enhance operational effectiveness.
- Find out what promises were made by previous units. A new leader will own these promises and need to make good on them.

- Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) are both good and bad. A military leader cannot order them to do anything, but the leader can provide a compelling argument to support different options. NGOs can be a combat multiplier or a cause of significant challenges, so they cannot simply be ignored.
- Understand the host nation's government. Each government has its own systems. Some government positions may be elected while others are selected. Some countries may pay their employees via centralized means while others may use direct cash distributions. A leader needs to know how the host nation government operates in order to effectively assist and guide their partners.

Development Challenges

- Focus on host nation priorities. This is difficult because these priorities depend on who one is talking to. Governors, tribal elders, warlords, and other local leaders will each have their own set of priorities, most of which revolve around what is in it for them.
- Maintain fair prices and wages. In Afghanistan, the Coalition paid interpreters approximately $600 (USD) a month while local teachers made only $65 a month. The Coalition paid as much as $200,000 for schools that could cost far less on the local market. Coalition leaders need to understand how their own processes impact the local economy and governance.
- Monuments of ineptitude represented hundreds of unfinished projects that needed to be torn down because they were built poorly or unfinished. These structures equal broken promises, which only add to the challenges in building relationships and a trusted government. Follow-through is mandatory for all projects. The common thread on the hundreds of good projects completed in Afghanistan was leadership attention and project follow-through.
- Water is both the cause of many problems and the source of many solutions. Terrible infant mortality rates are created because people do not boil water, use water sources as latrines, fail to wash their hands, and do not clean food. Educating people on safe water use will improve population health and reduce infant mortality rates.
- A leader should know contractors, including who is good and who is a crook. Local contractors are usually better, but this is not always the case. Watch for the contractor from outside the local area; in Afghani-

stan, oftentimes a contract given to a party in Kabul was subcontracted to another in Kandahar, who then subcontracted further and hired locals anyway. Money was squandered in monumental proportions because the Coalition did not know what it was doing. The Coalition came in and out while the contractors stayed, milking the Coalition all the way.

- Balance is required in helping local citizens access medical support. The medical community and NGOs argue that medical support makes the locals dependent and gives a false expectation. However, CTU saved many people's lives—especially kids—and all of a sudden, improvised explosive devices (IEDs) in that area stopped cropping up or were turned in. The case for false expectations is interesting; the case for saving soldiers' lives based on improving relationships is compelling.

Afghan National Security Forces Capacity Building

- In Afghanistan, full partnership between the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) and Coalition forces sped up training and proficiency. Coalition and Afghan forces lived, ate, trained and fought together. From the author's perspective, the risk associated with insider attacks was outweighed by the benefits of increased training and operational performance. After building local security force capacity, the leader can then pull away and reallocate their forces.
- Soldiers and junior police are well-trained and -motivated when they leave basic training. The challenge is that leadership at the patrol bases is less than effective. Fight for schools, especially explosive ordnance school.
- The Operational Coordination Center, Provincial (OCCP) was a vital element to success. Fight your fights out of the OCCP.

Tactics

- Ensure that squads (or platoons) are drilled and equipped to win at the point of contact every time. Platoon commanders and squad leaders are the warfighters. Ensure that they are enabled with information, communication systems, and weaponry to win in combat from the moment they depart a base location. Localized contacts are intense. Ensure that junior leaders feel supported and are confident that they can make tough decisions and use their initiative as necessary. Cultivate a highly aggressive killer instinct in them. Junior leaders in modern Western armies are at risk of decision paralysis at the point of contact due to institutionalized risk averse processes, and micromanagement. Strip that away. The decisive phase of most contacts is over before company, battalion, or brigade commands become situationally aware enough to offer any assistance. The squad is on its own; it must think that way, and it must win every time. At the company, battalion, and brigade levels, quick reaction with additional assets is vital to success.

- Provincial and district operational coordination centers provide civilians a safe place to report insurgent activity. They can also be used to coordinate other civilian activities and services.
- Be prepared to go fully kinetic. Contact situations can happen at any time and end quickly, so operations centers need to be able to react quickly.
- Civilian casualties will happen, so leaders need to be prepared to react quickly. In Afghanistan, relationships with local leaders, tribal elders, and *mullahs* (Muslim clergy leaders) were critical. Insurgents normally put out their own information operations before an event even occurred, so the Coalition was behind in messaging. Issue a radio broadcast immediately (within 10–15 minutes) of a negative event. Truthful messages pushed out quickly through appropriate means can help mitigate a bad situation.
- Information operations are essential to getting the host nation government and Coalition’s message out. Communicate using the same methods as the locals. For example, if the population is illiterate, written messaging is not as effective as it would be in a literate society. Radio is the number-one method of mass communication. In Afghanistan, using the portable, self-powered radio-in-a-box system helped more people tune in. Face-to-face communication with local leaders and citizens was enhanced by walking the streets and talking to people. Capitalize on every opportunity to engage with locals.

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About the Author

The Honorable James L. Creighton commanded Combined Team Uruzgan (CTU) from August 2010 to June 2011. He retired from the U.S. Army as a colonel after 30 years of service. During his career, he held numerous key command positions, to include commander of CTU in Tarin Kowt, Afghanistan, under the 10th Mountain Division in the International Security Assistance Force's (ISAF) Regional Command South; assistant division commander for support for the 2d Infantry Division at Camp Humphreys, South Korea; and command positions in the 101st Airborne Division at Fort Campbell, Kentucky, and the 10th Mountain Division at Fort Drum, New York. He also served in critical staff positions, to include chief of plans, ISAF Joint Command (IJC) in Kabul, Afghanistan; special assistant to the commander of U.S. Forces Korea; chief of staff of the Eighth U.S. Army in South Korea; chief of staff of the Joint Functional Component Command for Space and Global Strike in Omaha, Nebraska; executive assistant to the commander of U.S. Strategic Command in Omaha, Nebraska; and additional staff assignments in Honduras, Germany, Texas, Kentucky, and New York.

Creighton was elected to the New Hampshire state legislature as the representative for Hillsborough County District 38 in November 2020. He is the chief executive officer of Eagle Point Global Solutions, an organization dedicated to developing leaders and helping resolve some of the world's most difficult challenges. He serves as a leadership coach at the Tuck School of Business at Dartmouth College in Hanover, New Hampshire, and has executed high-level discussions in Russia, China, Pakistan, India, Afghanistan, and many other locations that focused on developing locally derived practical solutions to difficult problems. He also cofounded Ursa Major Northeast Guides to bring leadership and wilderness adventures to veterans, youth, and others.

Creighton previously served as the chief operating officer for the EastWest Institute, a global nonprofit organization with offices located in New York, Brussels, Moscow, and Washington, DC. The institute was renowned for world-class track 1.5 and track 2 negotiations that are required to solve global problems. He served as an adjunct professor at Bard College in Red Hook, New York, and has lectured at Dartmouth College, Columbia University in New York, New York; the U.S. Military Academy in West Point, New York; Korea University in Seoul, South Korea;

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Creighton was raised in Los Angeles, California. After graduation from the U.S. Military Academy in 1982, he was commissioned as a field artillery officer in the U.S. Army. He has earned master's degrees from Central Michigan University in Mount Pleasant, Michigan; Marine Corps University in Quantico, Virginia; and National Defense University in Washington, DC. He is a lifetime member of the Council on Foreign Relations.

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